

August 2, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leading public health and medical organizations, we strongly support of your administration's decision to reconsider the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone air pollution. We note with great concern that, once again, your Administration has not met the deadline promised to complete that reconsideration.

This marks the fourth delay of this lifesaving health standard. This work was originally scheduled for completion nearly one year ago in August 2010. Each day of delay postpones the start of the implementation of these standards and the lifesaving pollution cleanup. We urge you to finalize the most protective standard, and do so immediately.

The ozone health standard must protect those who are most vulnerable from the dangerous health impacts of ozone, including children, older adults, and those with chronic diseases. To safeguard the health of the American people, help to save lives, and reduce health care spending, we support the most protective standard under consideration: 60 parts per billion (ppb) averaged over eight hours.

As we have seen this summer with numerous code orange and code red days, ozone or smog can cause asthma attacks, coughing and wheezing, and shortness of breath. There are hundreds of studies documenting harm to the respiratory system, and now growing evidence warns that ozone may harm the cardiovascular system as well. Breathing unhealthy levels of smog sends people to the hospital and emergency rooms and creates serious health risks. Multiple studies show that ozone actually can kill people.

In fact, based on EPA's own estimates, measures to reduce ozone pollution will save as many as 12,000 lives each year. Reducing ozone levels is an important component of a larger national strategy to prevent diseases and promote health. Beyond the direct health effects, efforts to encourage the public to pursue more active, healthier lifestyles are hampered by poor air quality and the environmental health risks associated with exposure to ozone.

An overwhelming 75 percent of voters support EPA setting stricter limits on smog, according to a recent America Lung Association bi-partisan poll. The poll found that 65 percent say that stricter standards on air pollution will not damage our economic recovery, with 54 percent believing that updates are likely to create more jobs, not less.

Reducing ozone levels is fundamental to protecting the health of Americans. Reducing ozone saves expenses that are currently going for additional medicine, avoidable hospital admissions

and emergency department treatment, missed school days and missed work days. Millions live in areas that are already polluted with too much smog. They are already paying the price—too often with their lives.

Setting a health-based ozone standard based on the science is long overdue. We urge you to act today and set a new ozone standard to protect public health.

Sincerely,

American Lung Association

American Heart Association

American Thoracic Society

American Public Health Association

American Academy of Pediatrics

Trust for America's Health

National Home Oxygen Patients Association

National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care

American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

National Environmental Health Association

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

cc. William M. Daley, Chief of Staff, The White House
Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality