

American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation • American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine • American College of Preventive Medicine • American Heart Association • American Lung Association • American Public Health Association • American Thoracic Society • Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America • National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care • National Association of County and City Health Officials • National Association of Local Boards of Health • Physicians for Social Responsibility • Trust for America's Health

May 13, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leading medical, public health, disease and patient advocacy organizations, we welcomed the decision that U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson made in January 2010 to reconsider the 2008 decision on the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone air pollution. Over a year has passed since this announcement and we write today to ask that you direct the EPA to issue a strong standard to protect public health.

When announcing the reconsideration of the ozone health standard, Administrator Jackson stated "Using the best science to strengthen these standards is a long overdue action that will help millions of Americans breathe easier and live healthier." We wholeheartedly agree and are concerned about what continued delay means for public health.

The ozone health standard must protect those who are most vulnerable from the negative 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.

Just over one month ago, the panel of independent, expert scientists who advise EPA on the national standards reiterated their strong support for a new, stronger ozone standard. In a letter to Administrator Jackson the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee used unequivocal language to urge her to set more protective standards:

"Here we reaffirm that the evidence from controlled human and epidemiological studies strongly supports the selection of a new primary ozone standard within the 60 – 70 ppb range for an 8-hour averaging time. As enumerated in the 2006 Criteria Document and other companion assessments, the evidence provides firm and sufficiently certain support for this recommended range for the standard."¹

These advisors had previously recommended the same more protective range in three letters (October 24, 2006, March 26, 2007 and April 7, 2008) to former Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. Using just the evidence available during the review, the scientists evaluated the evidence from over 1,700 studies of the health impacts of ozone. Again, they recommended

¹ Letter from Dr. Jonathan M. Samet, Chair, Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, to Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, March 30, 2011.

unanimously that the ozone standard should be set between 60-70 ppb to protect human health. We recommend that EPA set the most protective standard which would be the bottom end of that range.

Ozone or smog can cause asthma attacks, coughing and wheezing, and shortness of breath. 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 disease 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. Reducing ozone levels is as much about disease prevention and health promotion as it is about pollution control.

Millions live in areas that are already polluted with too much smog. They are our primary reason for urging the EPA to set the national air standard for ozone at the most protective level recommended -- 60 ppb.

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

Sincerely,

American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
National Association for Medical Direction of Respiratory Care
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Trust for America's Health

cc: Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality