

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

We write in support of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rule to retain existing air quality standards for fine particulate matter, also known as PM_{2.5}.

At a time when economic stimulus and public services are critical to the nation's recovery, retaining these standards, which were set by the Obama Administration, will allow air quality improvements to continue without causing local communities across the country to suffer unnecessary job loss and further erosion of tax revenue.

EPA, states, and the regulated community have successfully worked together to slash PM_{2.5} emissions, resulting in a 43% improvement in related air quality since 2000. In the last three years alone, PM_{2.5} emissions have dropped 7%. These ongoing improvements will continue under existing programs even without changes to PM_{2.5} standards.

Against this backdrop, a clear majority of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee voted to retain the Obama Administration's existing PM_{2.5} standards. That majority found substantial uncertainties with studies, many of which failed to account for air quality improvements, claiming to show health effects below the Obama Administration's PM_{2.5} standards.

Our constituents are returning to the workforce, many from recent unemployment. The local communities that we represent must overcome depressed business activity and depleted tax bases. Americans cannot now afford the consequence of more stringent PM_{2.5} standards that experts conclude do not clearly improve public health – especially when PM_{2.5} emissions are already dropping under existing programs. The resulting new regulatory burdens would undermine community business investment, curtail employment opportunities, and reduce tax revenue supporting local schools as well as first and frontline responders—effectively hamstringing efforts to overcome tough economic times. These impacts could reverberate to every part of the country.

Areas that do not meet new air standards face immediate, substantial, and long-lasting economic consequences. Existing facilities could be required to install new, expensive controls. New businesses seeking to build or upgrade operations must install the most effective PM_{2.5} emissions controls, *without consideration of cost*, and are subject to enhanced EPA oversight. In

addition, businesses must offset new PM_{2.5} emissions by paying for emissions reductions at existing facilities. In the absence of affordable offsets, new projects cannot proceed. Local infrastructure is also impacted as federal funds for transportation projects are withheld unless those projects can be shown not to increase PM_{2.5} emissions. Restrictions do not end once these areas achieve PM_{2.5} standards. Instead, they must petition EPA to be re-designated to attainment by submitting a complex maintenance plan listing numerous mandatory and long-lasting measures.

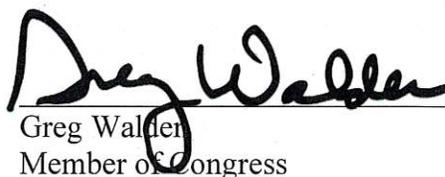
The consequences of lowering PM_{2.5} standards extend even to areas *meeting* those standards. New projects and major expansions in these areas require permits demonstrating that they will not exceed the standards. Businesses trying to make such demonstrations are already pinched between PM_{2.5} standards set near levels of emissions that naturally occur or are transported from other countries, and EPA modeling *designed* to over predict PM_{2.5} concentrations. Lowering PM_{2.5} standards further would eliminate the little margin left for businesses to obtain the necessary approvals for new, state-of-the-art projects. This could force companies operating in areas meeting PM_{2.5} standards to install controls *even more costly* than those required in areas that *fail them* – or to simply not build at all.

We therefore commend EPA for proposing to retain the Obama Administration's PM_{2.5} standards. This proposal supports local communities now fighting to get back on their feet, while continuing to drive to lower PM_{2.5} levels under existing programs. It will also provide EPA time to assess new or uncertain science regarding PM_{2.5} in the next review cycle, which will begin immediately after this proposal is finalized. We therefore encourage EPA to move quickly towards a final rule.

Sincerely,



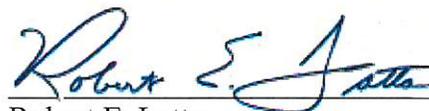
John Shimkus
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



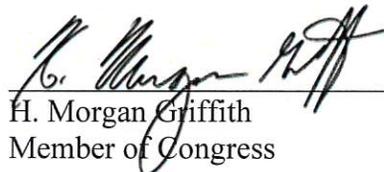
Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress



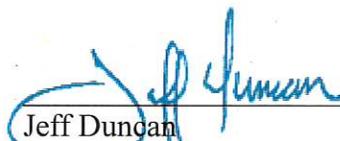
Bill Flores
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress



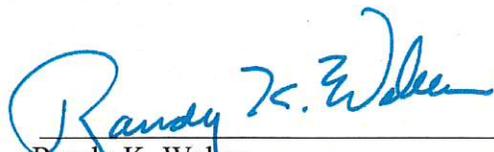
Scott Perry
Member of Congress



Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress



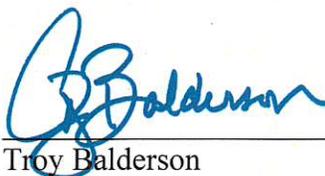
Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



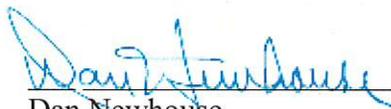
Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



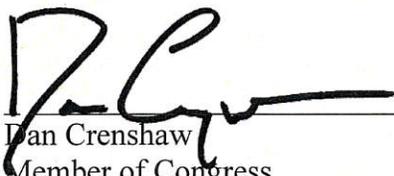
Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



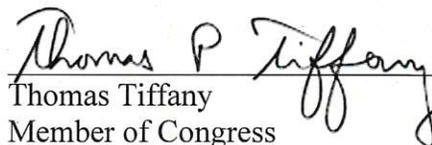
Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



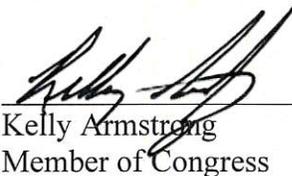
Thomas Tiffany
Member of Congress



Steve Shabot
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress