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Clean Air Advocates Urge Support For New Carbon Protections

Ahead of Arizona House Hearing On New Safeguards

PHOENIX, AZ – Today, prior to an Arizona House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee hearing on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s new carbon protections on power plants, clean air and clean energy advocates gathered at the Arizona Statehouse to urge support for critical safeguards.

“We are urging Arizona leaders to support these new protections to reduce carbon pollution – to clean up our air, improve the health of our children, and begin to curb the worst effects of climate disruption,” **said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter.** “Arizona has great solar resources and has begun to implement important energy saving measures too, but we can and should do more to move away from coal and gas to a truly clean energy future.”

"Carbon pollution is already affecting Arizona in so many ways, from a prolonged drought to more intense wildfires and extreme heat," **said Bret Fanshaw, advocate with Environment Arizona.** “Our legislators should take advantage of these new protections and move towards clean solar energy to leave a better Arizona for our kids.”

Announced last week, the new safeguards represent first-ever national protections from carbon pollution from existing power plants. These new goals, which are part of the President’s Climate Action Plan, will help clean up the industries that create nearly 40 percent of the carbon pollution in our country. Power plants and transportation are the top two emitters of carbon pollution in Arizona. Arizonans also suffer from poor air quality and the harmful health impacts from high pollution levels. The new protections will also help reduce other life-threatening air pollution including mercury, soot, and smog.

“For nearly fifty years our air, land, health and water suffered due to the surrounding seven power plants and mining operations on our lands,” **said Elsa Johnson, Navajo tribal member.** “Navajo and Hopi tribes being most affected, our grassroots leaders, have tirelessly advocated for clean energy. We want to see the strong carbon pollution limits on coal-fired power plants both on and off the tribal lands and to see EPA, DOI, and DOE work with tribes to facilitate a defined transition to renewable energy such as solar and wind.”

"We need action now on climate change," **said Reverend Oscar Tillman, president, Maricopa County NAACP.** “Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed limits on the carbon pollution coming from our power plants. Now, Arizona has the opportunity to develop a plan that achieves these safeguards and provides protection for our environment and our health.”

Carbon pollution causes climate disruption and is already costing American communities billions of dollars from drought, super-storms, wildfires, and extreme heat. Last month, a national committee of experts in agriculture, climate science, commerce, and disaster relief released the [National Climate Assessment \(NCA\)](#) at the White House. The report predicts the Southwest can expect even more heat waves, more extreme and sustained droughts, and poorer air and water quality in the decades ahead, which threatens the health and security of Arizona families and businesses.

“Climate change is the number one moral issue of our time, and its effects are already being realized, not just here in Arizona, but all over the world” **said Sarah King, chair, Earth Care Commission.** “Both locally and worldwide,

our most vulnerable populations-- the poor, the sick, the very young--will be the hardest-hit by the accompanying drought, disease, higher temperatures, and crop failures. The EPA's new standards represent a much-needed first step toward curbing carbon pollution and could serve as a model for international action.”

Seventy-two percent of Arizonans believe that the government should limit dangerous greenhouse gas emissions created by polluting industries, according to a polling report released in 2013 by Rep. Henry A. Waxman (CA) and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), co-chairs of the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change. The report also showed that at least 88 percent of Arizonans polled acknowledged the existence of climate disruption, a fact that Arizona can no longer ignore.

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