

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“Reality Check: The Impact and Achievability of EPA’s Proposed Ozone Standards”
Full Committee Hearing

March 17, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Smith, and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning. We are here today to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposal to lower the standard for ozone, the pollutant that causes smog, from the current standard of 75 parts per billion to a standard in the range of 65 to 70 parts per billion. The scientific evidence supports a lower standard for ozone than we currently have. According to the EPA’s analysis, strengthening the standard will provide better protection for our children by preventing 320,000 to 960,000 asthma attacks; it will keep them from missing 330,000 to 1 million days in school; and it will stop between 750 and 4,300 premature deaths.

As someone who worked in the public health field before I entered politics, I am very sensitive to the problem poor air quality can have on the health of Americans, especially the young and the infirm. Unfortunately, those of us from the Dallas-Fort Worth region are very familiar with the negative effects of smog and are accustomed to seeing orange and red alerts warning us about being outside because the air is too polluted for it to be safe. In fact, the American Lung Association gives the air quality in Dallas a grade of F—which means that the health of my constituents is seriously at risk.

It’s clear that air quality-related illnesses have a very real and destructive effect on the economy – on the order of hundreds of billions of dollars annually - and the benefits of reducing those effects will be seen throughout the country.

Despite that, some will argue that EPA’s proposed standard will kill jobs, decimate the industrial base, and result in irreparable economic disruption. This is not a new story. It’s what’s been said for decades about every major environmental and consumer protection--from catalytic converters to scrubbers to seatbelts. We all know that none of those predictions have come true. In fact, there is much more evidence showing that on balance, jobs are created and the economy expands following the passage of major reforms.

For example, the U.S. economy grew by 64 percent in the years following passage of the Clean Air Act. Furthermore, in a report to Congress on the costs and benefits of federal regulations, OMB estimated that major rules promulgated by the EPA between 2003 and 2013 had benefits between \$165 billion and \$850 billion, compared to costs of just \$38 billion to \$46 billion. That is a significant return on investment.

And however much we might wish for a world where big environmental issues are addressed voluntarily by industry or through the workings of the free market, we all know that it just does

not work that way. Now, more than ever, the American people need a strong EPA to protect their right to clean air and water.

Let me be clear, I am not insensitive to some of the concerns we will likely hear today. But I want to remind everyone that the EPA--as required by law-- must set the ozone standard at a level that will protect public health based on the science and not based on cost or technical feasibility. The health of Americans must come first.

That said, I am confident, based on past precedents that ultimately these regulations act as a catalyst for the creation of new jobs and industrial sectors.

Stricter pollutions limits force us to push the envelope of scientific innovation and create new technologies. According to the Department of Commerce, the United States is the world's largest producer of environmental protection technologies. Indeed at \$782 billion, the market for environmental goods and services is comparable to the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries and presents important opportunities for U.S. industry.

Thankfully, poll after poll shows that the public agrees with me and believes that the EPA should protect their right to clean air and water more than they believe that pollution is the price they must pay for economic security.

Although significant progress has been made in the past 40 years, it is our job now to build upon this legacy and ensure that we continue to improve the quality of our air.

A strong economy and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive. The Clean Air Science Advisory Committee recommends lowering the ozone standard, and I think we should listen to our scientists. We can and must do better for current and future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and yield back the balance of my time.