Natural Resources Defense Council Blog Posts on Global Warming

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Don't Dismantle the Clean Air Act As A Tool To Protect Us From Global Warming

The Clean Air Act has protected Americans from dangerous air pollution for 40 years. It has saved hundreds of thousands of lives and protected our lakes, forests, and other natural treasures from untold damage.[1] Now it’s time to rely on this landmark law to help protect us from global warming. This requires nothing different than what we’ve done for other kinds of pollution: follow the science, act when pollution endangers our health and welfare, and use available and affordable technology to clean up the largest pollution sources – vehicles, power plants, and big factories. It’s practical, effective, and affordable.
Now some members of Congress want to dismantle the Clean Air Act as a tool to protect us from global warming:

- A “resolution of disapproval” sponsored by Reps. Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) would overturn the Environmental Protection Agency’s scientific finding that global warming pollution is dangerous to our health and welfare, and would prohibit use of the Clean Air Act to protect us from that pollution. (H.J. Res. 66, companion to S.J. Res. 26, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).)

- Bills introduced by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and Ike Skelton (D-MO) would reverse the Supreme Court’s landmark 2007 global warming decision by declaring that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are not air pollutants. (H.R. 4396, H.R. 4572).

Both proposals would harm the health and welfare of millions of Americans by blocking use of the Clean Air Act to reduce global warming pollution. They would stop long-overdue action to hold the biggest polluters accountable for their global warming pollution and block investments to reduce America’s oil dependence and jump-start a vibrant clean energy economy.

Here are three reasons Congress should reject these Dirty Air Acts.

**Congress should not veto modern science or block action to protect Americans’ health from dangerous air pollution.**

When Congress wrote the Clean Air Act it wisely made science central to decision-making. The law requires that when science identifies new threats to health and the environment, new steps must be taken to protect the public. The Congress that wrote this law expected EPA to act when new dangers arose, without waiting for a later Congress to pass new laws.

Science has demonstrated that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases harm public health and the environment.

In a landmark 2007 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gases are air pollutants under the plain terms of the Clean Air Act. The Court held that EPA must take action if the administrator finds, based upon the science, that they are dangerous to public health and welfare.
That’s the “endangerment finding” that Administrator Lisa Jackson made in December, based on a thorough scientific assessment and after reviewing hundreds of thousands of public comments.

Overturning this scientific finding would be like vetoing the Surgeon-General’s report that smoking causes lung cancer. Congress should not be denying modern science. And Congress should not dismantle the Clean Air Act as a tool to respond to global warming.

**These bills would wreak havoc in the auto industry by blocking federal clean car standards supported by industry, labor, environmentalists and states.**

Last May, President Obama announced an historic agreement on national clean car standards. These consensus standards set under the Clean Air Act will cut vehicles’ carbon pollution by 30 percent, save consumers billions at the gas