

56 RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO U.S. SENATE: SAVE THE CLEAN AIR ACT

Rockefeller Bid to Delay EPA Regulation of Greenhouse Gases Mentioned as Unwise Move; Effort Involves Protestants, Jews, Unitarians and Other Leading Faith Organizations.

WASHINGTON, D.C.//November 23, 2010//A diverse group of 56 leading denominations and faith-based organizations today released a joint letter calling on the U.S. Senate to leave intact the power of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect the environment and public's health.

In particular, the religious leaders noted that the effort by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) to delay EPA controls on greenhouse gas emissions should be turned down.

The letter from the 56 national, regional and state faith groups comes as some members of Congress have threatened to undermine the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, including ozone emissions (smog).

The joint letter opens as follows: "As communities and people of faith, we are called to protect and serve God's great Creation and work for justice for all of God's people. We believe that the United States must take all appropriate and available actions to prevent the worst impacts of climate change; we therefore urge you to oppose any efforts to undermine the authority of the Clean Air Act (CAA) to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. We have seen various challenges to the CAA this session including Senator Rockefeller's proposal to delay regulation of greenhouse gases under the Environmental Protection Agency. We urge you to protect the Clean Air Act and allow the EPA to use the full strength of the law to ensure that God's Creation and God's children remain healthy."

Rev. Harriet Olson, deputy general secretary, United Methodist Women, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, said: "**As leaders in our communities of faith, we take very seriously our charge to act as stewards of God's Creation. Preserving a strong Clean Air Act and limiting the harm done by climate change are very important and concrete things we can do today working together as people of faith acting in that stewardship capacity.**"

Rev. Michael McClain, southeastern coordinator, African American Climate Initiative, National Council of Churches, noted that "**African Americans are disproportionately impacted by the effects of air pollution and climate change. With more than 70 percent of African Americans and Latinos living in counties that violate federal air pollution air pollution and ground-level ozone have extreme health impacts, including aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis, and premature death. Asthma is one of the leading serious chronic illnesses in African American children.**"

Rabbi Daniel J. Swartz, Temple Hesed, Scranton, PA., said: "**Jewish values teach us to be good caretakers of our earth and all its resources, and to protect the life and health of all people. The Clean Air Act has helped to ensure that we protect the earth and we must ensure that this continues.**"

Rabbi Swartz is the author of "To Till and To Tend: A Guide for Jewish Environmental Study and Action," published by the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and "Faith Communities and Environmental Health: From Global to Local," for which he won the 2005 Award for Excellence in Professional and Scholarly Publishing from the Association of American Publisher.

Rev. Chris Boerger, bishop, Northwest Washington Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said: "**For more than 30 years, the Clean Air Act has protected our air and the health of all creation, embodying the Christian ethic of stewardship for God's earth. Climate change presents a critical challenge for the future health of our planet and each of us, and the Clean Air Act is a key component of efforts to address that threat. Efforts to interfere with this vital legislation threaten the**

progress we have made in caring for the earth as well as the health and well-being of future generations.”

The balance of the joint letter reads as follows:

“The [Clean Air Act] has a strong history of reducing pollution and protecting God’s children and God’s Creation, successfully decreasing the prevalence of acid rain, responding to health threatening smog and ozone problems faced in our major urban areas, and generally improving the air quality of our nation in the decades since its passage.

It is only appropriate that the CAA continue to oversee any and all air-related challenges that we face. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gas emissions, the leading cause of climate change are, in fact, covered under the CAA and could be regulated by the EPA. New CAA regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions will also ensure that the largest emitters, such as power plants and factories, use the best available technologies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and begin to shift to sustainable forms of energy.

The EPA, in its efforts to implement the CAA in an appropriate manner, has already proposed to tailor the CAA to exempt small carbon emitters and apply them only to large sources that have long been subject to similar standards for other pollutants.

Further changes to the Clean Air Act would limit the EPA’s ability to live out its role and diminish the strength of the law. Senator Rockefeller’s bill, and other proposals, would allow our nation’s substantial contribution to global climate change to continue unchecked, exposing vulnerable communities to the impacts of climate change. In addition, this attempt to undermine the authority of the EPA and the CAA to regulate greenhouse gas emissions will interfere with an effective U.S. response to this global crisis.

Any attempt to undermine the Clean Air Act threatens the well being of at risk communities, undermines efforts to shift to a sustainable energy future, and inevitably will impact the right of all of God’s children to live in a healthy world. Congress should instead focus its efforts on passing comprehensive climate legislation and national energy policy as a means to ensure a just and sustainable future for God’s Creation.”

The full list of the signers of the faith organization letter are (in alphabetical order):

Church of the Brethren
Church World Service
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Franciscan Action Network
Interfaith Power and Light
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
National Council of Churches USA
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness
The Missionary Oblates, Justice Peace/Integrity of Creation Office
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Women

State and Regional Groups

Arizona Interfaith Power and Light
California Council of Churches
California Council of Churches IMPACT
Connecticut's Interfaith Power and Light, a project of Interreligious Eco-Justice Network
Earth Ministry
Eco-Justice Ministries
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns
The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut
Faith in Place
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light
Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light
GreenFaith
Illinois Interfaith Power & Light
Iowa Interfaith Power and Light
Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light
Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota
Maine Council of Churches
Maine Interfaith Power and Light
Michigan Interfaith Power and Light
Minnesota Council of Churches
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light
North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Presbyterians for Earth Care
Rhode Island Interfaith Power and Light
Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light
Texas Impact
Virginia Interfaith Center
Virginia Interfaith Power and Light
Voices for Earth Justice (MI)
Washington Association of Churches
Washington Interfaith Power and Light
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light

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CAN'T PARTICIPATE?: A streaming audio replay of the news event will be available on the Web at <http://www.nccecojustice.org> as of 5 p.m. EST on November 23, 2010. The full text of the joint letter is available at the same URL.