

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to urge your administration to finalize the EPA's New Source Performance Standards to address growing air pollution and public health impacts related to the rapid expansion of drilling in the United States, and ensure these standards are strong. This rapid expansion, largely related to new types of hydraulic fracturing, is increasingly occurring adjacent to population centers including private residences and schools, with reported health problems growing in tandem. Your administration has taken a strong stand in valuing science driven policy that protects public health and agency directive, we hope you will continue that standard with this decision.

This industry emits significant quantities of pollutants, including smog-forming chemicals, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's), hazardous air pollutants such as benzene, and the potent greenhouse gas methane. These pollutants contribute to serious health problems. Just last month for example, the Colorado School of Public Health concluded a report based on three years of monitoring that found higher cancer, respiratory and neurological health risks (including headaches, chronic dizziness, eye irritation and difficulty breathing) among people living closest to wells. The analysis found residents near wells faced volatile organic chemicals at five times the level at which the emissions are considered potentially harmful to public health, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Hazard Index. The Medical Society of New York has recently urged caution with expanded drilling, underlining experienced health impacts and the need for more study on those impacts before more drilling moves forward. Even the government's own science has shown increased ground level ozone and other pollution as a result of drilling, with data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The EPA's proposed New Source Performance Standards would take an important step toward reducing health-harming pollution. When fully implemented, these rules would cause significant air pollution reductions, including: 540,000 tons of smog-forming chemicals, an industry-wide reduction of 25 percent; 38,000 tons of toxic air pollutants, an industry-wide reduction of almost 30 percent, and; 3.4 million tons of methane, an industry-wide reduction of about 26 percent. The lion's share of these reductions come from ending the wasteful practice of venting or flaring pollution from new hydro-fractured gas wells directly into the atmosphere. The rules instead require companies to capture these emissions, a time-tested technique that can be readily implemented.

Because gas companies would achieve these reductions largely by capturing emissions before they escape, they can both reduce waste and pollution. In fact, the EPA estimates that because the value of captured product exceeds the cost of compliance, the proposed rules would yield a net annual savings of almost \$30 million. With the industry seeing record growth and profits, a policy with such minimal if not positive economic impacts such as this, should not be opposed.

Although these rules are an important step, they could go even further to cut air pollution from oil and gas wells. The Secretary of Energy Advisory Board Shale Gas Production Subcommittee found that the rules are "a critical step forward in reducing emissions of smog-forming pollutants and air toxics" but fall short of its recommendations because they do not directly regulate methane emissions and only address pollution from new, not existing, gas infrastructure.

We respectfully urge your administration to finalize these important rules as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

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