

Clean Air Cities Campaign
Center for Biological Diversity Talking Points
September 2011

These talking points are intended to be guides. Don't feel as if you must repeat them word for word. The main goal is to let your representatives know:

- How important stopping global warming is to you;
- How key the Clean Air Act is to winning that fight; and
- That together, our towns and cities can both save the Clean Air Act and push the Environmental Protection Agency to ambitiously, rapidly harness the power of this critical law to tackle the climate crisis.

1. No delay: We don't have the time to wait to act.

The evidence of climate change is all around us. Every day, new stories and scientific studies pour in documenting impacts of climate change we're already experiencing. 2005 had the most hurricanes on record since 1851. In winter 2011, blizzards plagued the Northeast. In summer 2011, intense rainfall and snowmelt forced the Mississippi River to overflow its banks across the Midwest and south. And an unprecedented 2011 Texas drought led the U.S. Department of Agriculture to declare the entire state a natural disaster zone.

The message is clear: Climate change is not an abstract problem for the future. It's happening now, we're causing it, and the longer we wait to act, the more we lose and the more difficult the problem will be to solve.

In 2006, eminent climate scientist Dr. James Hansen said we had only a 10-year window of opportunity to take decisive action on global warming and avert catastrophe. It's 2011; that leaves us about five years to turn things around.

We have already caused atmospheric carbon dioxide to increase from 280 to 392 parts per million (ppm). Earth's history shows that an atmospheric CO₂ amount of 450 ppm eventually would yield dramatic changes, including sea level tens of meters higher than today. Such a level of atmospheric CO₂ and global warming means we would hand our children and grandchildren a climate system out of their control. We simply can't wait any longer to act.

The scientific consensus is clear: We must reduce the level of atmospheric CO₂ to 350 parts per million (ppm) or below to avoid global catastrophe, and the Clean Air Act could get us there.

2. The Clean Air Act works.

The Clean Air Act has protected the air we breathe for four decades; it is America's most important and most successful law for controlling air pollution. In short, it requires the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, to identify and limit all major sources of air pollution to ensure that pollution is reduced to levels that do not endanger human health and welfare.

According to the EPA, in 2010 alone the Clean Air Act saved 23,000 lives and prevented 1.7 million asthma attacks, 4.1 million lost work days, and more than 68,000 hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

With the Clean Air Act, air quality in this country has improved significantly since 1970, despite major growth both in our economy and industrial production.

Between 1970 and 1990, the six main pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act — particulate matter and ground-level ozone, both of which contribute to smog and asthma, carbon monoxide, lead, sulfur and nitrogen oxides (the acid gases that cause acid rain) were reduced by between 47 and 93 percent. Airborne lead was virtually eliminated.

The Clean Air Act also saves money and protects our economy. In its first two decades alone, the Act provided benefits including decreased healthcare costs and reduced lost work time worth \$22.2 trillion — benefits 42 times greater than the estimated costs of regulation.

3. Just as the Obama administration is beginning to use the Clean Air Act, big polluters and their allies in Congress want to gut or delay it.

Precisely because it *is* so powerful, the Clean Air Act is under attack by those in Congress and industry who want to give big polluters free rein to continue dumping carbon pollution into our air and warming our planet. Since Clean Air Act programs began limiting CO₂ emissions, there have been a flurry of bills and amendments trying to delay or destroy the ability of the EPA deal with greenhouse gas pollution.

The Clean Air Act is so important now because it can immediately curb greenhouse gas pollution and global warming through its proven, successful pollution-reduction programs.

The EPA is acting to implement the Clean Air Act to reduce greenhouse gas pollution because it was ordered to move forward by the U.S. Supreme Court in the critically important 2007 U.S. Supreme Court case *Massachusetts vs. the Environmental Protection Agency*.

In April 2010, the Obama administration issued the first rule to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. This rule increased the fuel economy standards for cars.

The Clean Air Act's New Source Review program requires new or modified sources of greenhouse gas pollution to adopt pollution control measures through a permitting system. New Source Review began being applied to greenhouse gases as of January 2, 2011.

The Clean Air Act's New Source Performance Standards program allows EPA to set limits on the amount of greenhouse gas pollution different sources (such as coal-fired power plants, oil refineries, cement factories) may emit. In 2012, the EPA is scheduled to set maximum amounts of greenhouse gas emissions for refineries and power plants.

And the Clean Air Act's criteria air pollutant program, the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, allows the EPA, for those substances it has designated as "criteria" pollutants, to set a total cap on the amount of pollution allowed in the atmosphere — a limit such as, for example, no more than 350 parts per million.

4. Americans want to save and use the Clean Air Act.

92 percent of respondents to a survey by the Yale Project on Climate Change said the nation needs to act to reduce global warming. The same survey found that 80 percent of respondents said government should regulate CO₂ as a pollutant. And the top two reasons cited for the need for government action were: providing a better life for our children and grandchildren (66 percent) and saving many plant and animal species from extinction (65 percent).

The Clean Air Act provides a comprehensive system of pollution control with a proven track record of success that is well suited to solving the climate crisis. The Act could also work in conjunction with new climate legislation. Now is the time to enforce the Clean Air Act, not delay or gut it.

5. Cities like ours can lead on climate change.

Our city should be / is a leader in the fight against climate change. We have already... *[here, discuss steps your city has already taken, such as developing a climate action plan, signing the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, reducing carbon emissions by X%, etc. If you're not sure what your city has done, we can help you find out.]*

And our city could be at the forefront of this increasingly urgent crisis by passing a resolution urging EPA administrator Lisa P. Jackson and President Barack Obama to move swiftly to fully employ and enforce the Clean Air Act to reduce carbon in our atmosphere to no more than 350 parts per million.

Need more information? Have a question? Please contact Climate Campaign Director Rose Braz at rbraz@biologicaldiversity.org or (415) 436-9682 x 319.