

Conservationists urge Obama to veto any assault on the Clean Air Act

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On Thursday, in the same week that Rolling Stone published an article by Al Gore, basically taking Obama to task for not doing enough on climate change, a consortium of environmentally conscious groups has submitted a letter to the president signed by three hundred groups.

The letter asks the president to commit to a veto of any legislation that attacks the Clean Air Act, which is a major tool that can be used by the Environmental Protection Agency to limit pollution.

The document was signed by a grassroots coalition of faith, youth, civil rights, indigenous, health, environmental-justice and conservation groups around the country.

"We urgently need President Obama's moral leadership to protect the air we breathe and ensure future generations have a healthy, livable climate," said Bill Snape, senior counsel at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Members of Congress siding with big polluting corporations are bent on weakening the Clean Air Act, and we simply can't let that happen."

The letter comes on the heels of a statement made by the president's chief of staff, Bill Daley, as he responded to a question about Congress blocking EPA climate regulations. Daley said that Obama would not allow any legislation that "impedes the need to improve our health and safety."

"Daley's pledge last week that the administration would block any legislation that stands in the way of improving health and safety is just the kind of leadership we need to protect clean air, and what the American public expects from their leaders," said Debbie Sease, national campaign director for the Sierra Club.

The letter reads (in part):

The Clean Air Act provides powerful, cost-effective, and proven tools to combat pollution. It is the best tool in place to combat greenhouse gas pollution on a national scale. It must not be weakened, nor should the ambitious enforcement of its provisions to combat greenhouse gas pollution be deferred. If big polluters and their allies in Congress get their way, your EPA will be prevented from implementing the Clean Air Act to protect our public health and environment by reducing

dangerous carbon dioxide pollution that will permanently alter our climate.

We need you to provide the leadership you promised. We need you to stand up to big polluters and their congressional allies and publicly state that you will veto any legislative moves to repeal, weaken or delay the Clean Air Act's ability to curb greenhouse gas pollution.

"The Clean Air Act has always enjoyed broad bi-partisan support among the people of the United States. We know it saves lives and protects the health of everyone, especially the most vulnerable among us. Now EPA is proposing long-delayed and badly-needed additional protection for our health and climate. We should not yield to short-sighted arguments that would trade the long-term health of the country for the short-term economic benefit of a few businesses," said Marcia Cleveland of the Friends Committee on National Legislation.