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2002-0733

FAX COVER SHEET
OFFICE OF CONGRESSWOMAN CAROLYN B. MALONEY

DATE: JUNE 27, 2002

TO: DENNIS WALCOTT, DEPUTY MAYOR FOR POLICY

FAX NUMBER: 212-788-9711

FROM: Philip Craft

PHONE NUMBER: (212) 860-0606

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NOTES: Signed Copy

Thanks.

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES (including cover): 3

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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States

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June 26, 2002

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Whitman:

I am writing to express my deep concern over the Administration's plan to weaken the New Source Review (NSR) regulations under the Clean Air Act. I respectfully ask you to withhold your approval from any new proposal that would weaken the air quality protections and pollution clean-up measures required by NSR.

The NSR program requires that the nation's approximately 17,000 power plants, oil refineries and other major industrial facilities install up-to-date pollution control devices whenever plant modifications significantly increase air emissions. In the years since it was enacted, NSR has been responsible for eliminating and preventing the release of millions of tons of harmful pollutants into the air, thereby protecting regional and national air quality and public health.

More than 140 million Americans already live in areas with unhealthy air. I am well aware of the need to increase existing power generation capacity to avoid energy shortages and unnecessary price increases, but I strongly believe that both short and long-term energy resource plans can be implemented without risking the health of the American public. I appreciate your statement on CNN's Crossfire program (February 26, 2001) on this subject: "I asked our people to go back and to give me the environmental clean air regulations -- because it's clean air that we're talking about -- that were hampering the ability of the utilities in California to provide power and we couldn't find any."

Several communities in New York's 14th Congressional District, which I represent, are particularly at stake if clean air regulations are weakened. According to a recent study by the EPA, more toxic chemicals pumped into the air in Queens than in the four other boroughs combined. For the year 2000, Queens power plants sent 509,870 pounds of toxins into the environment based on self-reported data. The data reveals that the top 3 worst polluters in Queens are power plants and that air pollution accounts for virtually all of the emissions

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recorded. Less than one percent of the pollutants were released into the water or land. For these reasons, Western Queens has been dubbed 'Asthma Alley' for its high incidence of asthma among children and families due, among other things, to high levels of sulfur, nitrates and other particulate matter from power plants in the area.

These rule changes will have a measurable, negative impact on the lives of New Yorkers and all Americans. Air pollution from power plants is known to trigger asthma attacks, reduces lung capacity, and can lead to premature death. Ozone-smog caused over 510,00 asthma attacks and more than 12,300 emergency room visits during the summer of 1997. Fine particulate matter from power plants caused 1,800 New Yorkers and 30,000 people nationwide to die prematurely each year.

Several companies in Queens are already attempting to exploit a loophole that enables them to build new plants next to the super-polluting, old plants, rather than replacing them or upgrading pollution control technologies. A further slackening of the Clean Air Act's NSR regulation could enable these dirty plants to continue emitting toxins into our air in perpetuity.

I urge you to maintain EPA's traditional commitment to enforcing our nation's air quality standards and refrain from weakening the New Source Review provisions of the Clean Air Act. For our health and our children's health, I urge you to maintain the strongest possible regulations requiring old power plants and refineries to use modern technology when they are significantly modified.

Sincerely,



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

cc: Governor George E. Pataki
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg