

United States Senator Elizabeth Warren
Remarks on EPA Carbon Pollution Standards for Power Plants
June 2, 2014

Mr./Madam President, I come to the floor today to offer my strong support of the Environmental Protection Agency's "Clean Power Plan" to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. The EPA's proposal is a powerful step in the fight to protect our health and our environment.

We face a crisis. We know that high carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere are driving climate change. We know those carbon dioxide levels are increasing the acidity of our oceans, disrupting already-fragile marine ecosystems. And we know that power plants are responsible for about 40% of America's carbon pollution. Add all that up, and we know enough to know that reducing carbon pollution from power plant emissions will make a real difference in the fight against climate change.

Pollution from power plants is also associated with other dangerous chemicals. A study led by the University of Syracuse and Harvard University found that reducing carbon dioxide emissions from power plants can also reduce emissions of other pollutants such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and mercury. These dangerous chemicals contribute to acid rain, the destruction of ecosystems, ozone damage to trees and crops, and mercury in fish. These dangerous chemicals are also a direct threat to our health, increasing the risk of heart attacks, asthma, and even death. Add all that up, and we know enough to know that reducing power plant emissions will make a real difference in the health of our children, our parents, and ourselves.

Scientists all around the world have collected mountains of evidence about the dangers of carbon pollution, and their basic conclusions are no longer speculative or debatable. Even so, some politicians respond to this evidence by denying it is true – by rejecting scientific evidence – or by claiming they just can't understand the science.

This country wasn't built by people who ignored facts. Sure, the deniers can defend their friends in the pollution business. They can rail against science or pretend it doesn't exist. But the facts are catching up with us: this pollution is killing people across this country, and according to the American Lung Association, up to 100,000 asthma attacks and 4,000 premature deaths will be avoided *in the first year* that the Clean Power Plan goes into effect.

Let the deniers deny the facts – but don't let them deny our children clean air to breathe or deny our parents long and healthy lives.

The EPA's draft proposal, based on its authority under the Clean Air Act, is a common sense approach that builds on work already underway in states and cities across the country. Under the proposal, states will work with the EPA to reduce carbon pollution, and they can use a variety of tools to do it. The Clean Power Plan encourages states to be

creative and efficient, to partner with private industry to give our children a safer, healthier world.

In Massachusetts, we've seen how effective these solutions can be. After passing laws to improve energy efficiency and encourage renewable energy production, the Commonwealth joined neighboring states as part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. We call it "Reggie," and since 2005, RGGI has helped member states cut carbon emissions by 40 percent.

RGGI has shown results, and it has done so with bipartisan support and the backing of many members of the business community, members who understand that taking action against pollution not only is good for our public health and our environment – it is also good for business.

The fight against carbon pollution is about protecting our health, protecting our communities, and protecting our future. But make no mistake – this fight is also about whether this country works only for big energy companies, or whether it works for everyone else too.

The terrible consequences of failing to act are real, and we can't afford to wait. But every time legislation or regulations are proposed to clean up our air and water or to protect our environment, powerful, deep-pocketed corporations line up to fight these changes.

These opponents, and their Republican friends, are already attacking the EPA's proposed changes. Their latest move is to argue that the EPA's efforts somehow aren't legal. That argument is laughable. Seven years ago, my state of Massachusetts led a multi-state fight that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court to force the EPA to do its job to address carbon pollution in this country. We won that case, and we started a process that resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that the EPA has the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act.

But instead of embracing change, instead of working to develop rules to reduce pollution and protect the air we breathe, some companies and their Republican friends have fought change at every step.

They loudly defend a world where polluters cut their costs by spewing dangerous chemicals and greenhouse gases into our air and our water, leaving it to everyone else to deal with the consequences of their pollution. They loudly defend a world where giant oil companies suck down billions of dollars in subsidies every year, while the green energy industries of the future fight for every scrap of support. And they quietly work to tilt the playing field against the technologies of the future, so that clean energy entrepreneurs and innovators have a harder time succeeding – while dirty energy companies keep raking in the profits.

Climate change is real. More than 120 million Americans live in counties that border the shoreline, and a rising sea threatens their homes and communities. Millions more live in the paths of wildfires or will be caught in the droughts that will devastate our land. But unlike big energy companies, they don't have armies of lobbyists and lawyers to protect their interests. They see Washington ignore these problems, and they see a system that is rigged against them. These millions of Americans have only their voices – and they call on us to fight for them – to fight for meaningful action to address climate change.

The EPA's new Clean Power Plan is one part of the solution. We must build on this proposal, and continue our efforts to cut carbon pollution, to improve energy efficiency, and to invest in building a clean energy economy.

I applaud President Obama and EPA Administrator McCarthy for their leadership in stepping up and pushing for meaningful standards, and I expect that a strong, final rule will be implemented next year. Because no matter the opposition, no matter how powerful those industries that would let our forests burn, let our crops dry up, let our children get sick, and let our cities drown just to protect their own profits, we have no choice but to take real action to fight climate change. The simple truth is that our future depends on it.