



Clean Air Fact Sheet

**In 1970, Congress made a promise to future generations by passing the Clean Air Act.
Our air is safer now, but not safe enough for the most vulnerable in our communities.
It is up to us to keep the promise and to make our own promise to generations to come.**

Clean Air Protects the Health of our Families and Communities

- **Air pollution damages people's health and causes premature death**, particularly in children, the elderly, and people with chronic health problems. Air pollution causes or contributes to serious lung diseases, cancer, neurological defects, heart disease, and other health problems.
- **Air pollution, specifically ozone, is one of the major triggers of asthma attacks.** In Michigan, nearly 1 million people suffer from asthma, including more than 225,000 children. Asthma is one of the most common and costly diseases in the United States; 1 in 15 Americans suffers from asthma, including more than 7 million children.
- **Health problems related to air pollution are expensive.** The annual health care cost of asthma alone is approximately \$15.6 billion. Indirect costs, including more than 14 million days of work missed, add another \$5.1 billion for a total of \$20.7 billion. Michigan's 9 oldest coal plants cost residents \$1.5 billion annually in hospital admissions, premature deaths, and medical treatments.
- **Clean air standards improve health and save lives.** The Clean Air Act saved more than 160,000 lives in 2010, including the lives of 230 infants. Scientists estimate that in 2020 alone, the current Clean Air Act will save 230,000 lives, including the lives of 280 infants.

Clean Air Is Cost Effective

- **Clean air standards have significant economic benefits that outweigh the costs 30:1.** The beneficial economic effects are largely attributable to better health and productivity for American workers, as well as savings on medical expenses for air pollution-related health problems.
- **Utility industry claims about the economic impacts of clean air regulations are overstated and don't take the benefits into account.** Many of the power plants that would be affected by updated clean air standards are inefficient and are already being replaced by more efficient plants that are partially fueled by natural gas. Updating and replacing plants will also create jobs in construction, steelmaking, and the pollution control industry.

Americans Want Clean Air Protections

- **A broad base of constituencies has called on Congress to oppose efforts to block the safeguards that protect our families and communities:** the American Medical Association, American Lung Association, Conference of Mayors, League of Women Voters, National Council of Churches, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Sierra Club, Small Business Majority and numerous others.
- **Public polls show that two-thirds of voters support updating Clean Air Act standards and are opposed to Congress standing in the way.** By nearly a 20-point margin, voters believe that updated standards will boost, rather than harm, job creation.

Sources:

American Lung Association

“American Voters Strongly Oppose Congressional Action Against Clean Air Standards,” prepared by Ayres, McHenry & Associates, Inc., February 2011

“Asthma in Adults Fact Sheet,” February 2010

“Asthma & Children Fact Sheet,” February 2010

“State of the Air 2010”

“EPA’s Regulation of Coal-Fired Power: Is a ‘Train Wreck’ Coming?,” Congressional Research Service, August 8, 2011.

“The Benefits and Costs of the Clean Air Act from 1990 to 2020,” Environmental Protection Agency, March 2011.

“The Economic Affliction of Asthma and Risks of Blocking Air Pollution Safeguards,” Health Care Without Harm, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, and National Association of School Nurses, April 2011.

“Public Health Impacts of Old Coal-Fired Power Plants in Michigan,” Michigan Environmental Council, Summer 2011.

Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Michigan, 200 Museum Dr., Suite 104, Lansing, MI 48933.

Phone: 517-484-5383. Website: www.lwvmi.org.

For more information, visit www.peoplenotpolluters.org.