

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on EPA's New Carbon Pollution Standards for Fossil Fuel Power Plants

June 6, 2023

Today we will be discussing the EPA's recently proposed new carbon pollution standards for fossil fuel power plants. This proposal is long overdue and is critical to reducing dangerous air pollution, fighting the worsening climate crisis, and protecting communities across the nation. It builds on the climate and public health investments President Biden and Congressional Democrats made with the Inflation Reduction Act.

It is necessary now because the power sector is the second-largest source of climate pollution in the United States, yet these power plants are still allowed to spew carbon pollution without any oversight. I think most Americans would be surprised to hear that, right now, there are no limitations on how much carbon pollution these power plants can emit. It simply defies logic when you consider that week in and week out, communities around the nation are devastated by extreme weather events made worse by the climate crisis. Lives are lost – homes and livelihoods are destroyed.

Power plants are the single-largest industrial cause of global warming in the United States – they make up 25 percent of all carbon pollution nationwide. With fossil-fuel power plants being such a significant contributor to dangerous air pollution that only exacerbates the worsening climate crisis, these proposed standards are an important, complementary action that will benefit all Americans, as well as our environment and our economy.

The EPA's proposal will finally set necessary emission limits and guidelines for carbon pollution from new and existing fossil fuel power plants. It will cut dangerous carbon pollution and dramatically improve public health – particularly for communities already overburdened by air pollution. This is critical to our ongoing efforts to safeguard clean and safe air for all Americans. The proposal is estimated to avoid up to 617 million metric tons of total carbon dioxide through 2042 – that's equivalent to the annual emissions of roughly half of the cars in the United States.

Within the same timeframe, EPA projects that the proposed standards will result in up to \$85 billion in net climate and health-related benefits. We're going to save billions of dollars because Americans will be healthier thanks to this proposal's reductions in carbon pollution.

These are significant benefits, but my Republican colleagues would rather ignore them as they continue to push their polluters over people agenda. They have no problem letting dangerous air pollution go unchecked. In fact, they are opposed to this proposal.

Today, we will undoubtedly hear absurd arguments from the Republican majority about how EPA's proposal is illegal, will shut down power plants and turn off the lights.

We have heard these claims before, and none of them are true. In fact, they get rolled out whenever this – or any- administration acts on air pollution or the climate crisis.

Take the critical investments included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act to upgrade our nation's power infrastructure, strengthen the grid, and cut power sector pollution with clean energy tax credits. Just because none of my Republican colleagues here today voted for these laws doesn't mean they did NOT get enacted. The truth is, the market, bolstered by these key federal investments, is already driving changes in the power sector. EPA's proposal merely builds on this existing momentum.

Republicans are simply not interested in finding solutions to our carbon pollution problem. They are not interested in developing a plan to help us reduce emissions while still maintaining a safe, reasonably priced electricity system.

The Clean Air Act is clear – EPA has both the authority and obligation to protect Americans from dangerous carbon pollution. And Republicans have not offered any practical solutions to address the serious threat of air pollution and the climate crisis. Frankly, the Republican policy of "just say no" to any climate action is just getting old.

In my opinion, EPA's proposal, combined with the historic climate investments Democrats made last Congress, will put us on track to cleaner air, better health, a safer climate, and a stronger economy.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.