

Opening Statement
Rep. Jan Schakowsky
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Hearing on “EPA’s Proposed Ozone Rule: Potential Impacts on
Manufacturing”
June 16, 2015

Chairman Shimkus, Chairman Burgess, thank you for holding this hearing on the EPA’s proposed ozone rule and its impacts on manufacturing.

First, let’s make one thing clear: the EPA is responsible for setting ozone standards based on what is considered safe from a public health perspective. The compliance costs to business are not to be considered in its rulemakings.

Health experts, epidemiologists, and numerous medical organizations have clearly stated that the current ozone standard of 75 parts per billion (ppb) is not adequate to protect public health – particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, outdoor workers and those with chronic medical conditions like asthma.

The EPA has indicated its final rule (due in October) will likely land somewhere between 65 and 70 ppb. I strongly support EPA action on this issue, although I believe a 60 ppb standard would more effectively protect public health.

The existing standards are not doing enough to protect public health. In my home state of Illinois, 13% of children suffer from smog-related asthma – well above the national average.

In response to mounting medical evidence and Clean Air Act requirements, the federal courts rightly directed the EPA to reconsider existing inadequate health protections against smog last year.

Let me repeat – this rulemaking is court-mandated. Federal law requires the EPA to maintain clean air standards, and the courts have said it must do more to meet that requirement.

While anticipated business compliance costs have no place in determining ozone standards, industry concerns about the impacts of this rulemaking are overblown.

We will hear from some of our witnesses that proposed ozone standards would stifle manufacturing investments and expansion. That argument is not new – but it is flawed.

Since the Clean Air Act was enacted into law more than 40 years ago, we have seen tremendous progress in cleaning up our air and in protecting thousands of communities around the country. That has been done in concert with technological innovation and a growing economy.

Doomsday predictions about the impacts of EPA regulations on American businesses have never been borne out by the facts. From 1990-2010, emissions of the most common air pollutants have declined by more than 40 percent, while Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased by more than 65 percent.

These standards will save and improve American lives. I look forward to the EPA finalizing the rule, and to the manufacturing sector continuing its long record of success in expanding while at the same time complying with EPA regulations.

Again, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses to gain from their perspectives on this important rulemaking. I yield back the balance of my time.