

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0803

December 18, 2007

The Honorable Stephen Johnson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

It is my understanding that you are nearing a decision on EPA's proposal to revise the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground level ozone. As you know, I am interested in continuing to improve the nation's air quality, and as the Chairman of the Senate's Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety, I have been monitoring EPA's process very closely.

When you testified before my Subcommittee on July 11th of this year, you acknowledged that "new scientific evidence indicates that ozone's impacts are more significant than we previously thought," noting that expert research "confirms that ozone is harmful to people with asthma or other lung diseases, adults who are active outdoors and the youngest and oldest members of our population."

I am far too familiar with the adverse effects of ground level ozone. Delaware is at the end of America's tailpipe, and citizens in my state continue to be forced to breathe dirty air. During each of the summer months when ozone pollution is at its worst, more than 10,000 adult Delawareans are unable to work or carry out daily activities for one or more days. More than 6,000 adults in Delaware suffer from asthma, and Delaware has the highest asthma rate in the nation among children under 18, at 11.9 percent. Nationally, 27.1 million children age 13 and under are being exposed to unhealthy levels of ozone.

In your testimony, you acknowledged that the current ozone standard of .08 parts per million "does not protect public health with an adequate margin of safety and should be strengthened." You also stated that after considering the advice of EPA scientists and the agency's Clean Air Science Advisory Committee, it was your intent to strengthen the standard by setting it within a range of .070 to .075 parts per million.

Your statements during that hearing were strong and straightforward, and I encourage you to move forward with your stated goal of strengthening our nation's ozone standard. As Administrator of the EPA, it is your job to assimilate scientific data and make sometimes difficult decisions to ensure public health and safety. I respectfully ask that you follow the path of science in protecting human health, that you heed the course charted by the unanimous recommendations of EPA's 23-member independent science advisory committee, and that you be guided by EPA's own professional staff in strengthening our nation's clean air standards. Your decision will have serious consequences on the lives of many Americans.

With best personal regards, I am

P.S. I'm sure you're receiving a lot of pressure to go the other way on this one. Please don't do that and you'll make possible a healthier New Year for a lot of Americans. Merry Christmas to you and the Johnson family!

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Clean Air and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee