

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2003

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We commend your acknowledgment of the many public health and environmental problems associated with the emissions of electric power plants.

We are concerned that the current draft of the "Clear Skies" proposal could weaken protections that exist in current law regarding power plants' emissions of mercury. If the current proposal became law, it could delay reductions in mercury emissions from the electric generating sector beyond the current law's 2008 deadline. Moreover, power plant mercury emissions under the current proposal could be three times the level expected if the current law is enforced. As you noted, power plants are the single largest source of mercury emissions in the United States. The net effect of the current draft of "Clear Skies" could be to increase mercury emissions compared to the limits in current law.

Mercury emissions jeopardize the environment and public health, especially the health of young children. Mercury is a potent bioaccumulative neurotoxin, which can hurt a developing fetus and young child. In July 2000, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences agreed with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) estimate that 60,000 newborns annually may be at risk for neurodevelopmental effects from *in utero* exposure to mercury. This month, the Centers for Disease Control released a study that determined that almost eight percent of the roughly 61 million American women of child-bearing age had blood levels of mercury exceeding the precautionary standard set by the EPA.

Human exposure to mercury is primarily the result of eating fish contaminated with mercury. The number of states issuing warnings for mercury rose steadily from 27 states in 1993 to 44 states in 2002. In the past seven years, the number of advisories warning the public not to eat fish contaminated with mercury has more than doubled.

Progress in reducing public exposure to mercury depends upon strengthening the current Clean Air Act requirements for mercury. We hope to work with you to ensure that human health is protected, by preventing those requirements from being weakened.

Sincerely,

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Ackerman, Gary	Frost, Martin	McDermott, Jim
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Blumenauer, Earl	Holt, Rush	Miller, George
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Case, Ed	Kennedy, Patrick	Payne, Donald
Castle, Michael	Kildee, Dale	Pelosi, Nancy
Clyburn, James	Kilpatrick, Carolyn	Price, David
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Davis, Susan	Leach, James	Sanchez, Linda
DeGette, Diana	Lee, Barbara	Sanders, Bernard
Delahunt, William	Levin, Sander	Schakowsky, Jan
DeLauro, Rosa	Lewis, John	Schiff, Adam
Doggett, Lloyd	Lipinski, William	Serrano, Jose
Ehlers, Vernon	Lofgren, Zoe	Shays, Chris
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Filner, Bob	McCarthy, Karen	Tauscher, Ellen

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Weiner, Anthony
Wexler, Robert
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Wu, David