

WASHINGTON, DC (*September 10, 2012*) – Today Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), and Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL) sent a letter to Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), urging the adoption of a strong soot pollution standard to protect public health and the environment.

This June, the EPA proposed a tougher standard for allowable annual particle pollution of 12 to 13 micrograms per cubic meter. The current standard is 15 micrograms. Estimates show that the proposed EPA standard would prevent 8,000 premature deaths each year and avoid additional health complications for children, seniors, and those suffering from lung and cardiovascular diseases.

However, the letter submitted by Reps. Schakowsky, Gutierrez, and Rush encourages the EPA to consider the standard of 11 micrograms per cubic meter standard recommended by the American Lung Association. According to environmental and health experts, the stricter standard would prevent as many as 35,700 premature deaths, 2,350 heart attacks, 23,290 hospital and emergency room visits, and 29,800 cases of acute bronchitis each year. In the Chicago area alone, the stronger standard would prevent 2,240 premature deaths annually.

The letter also argues that stricter EPA standards are cost effective thanks to new, affordable advances in pollution control technology and renewable energy over the past two decades. Since the Clean Air Act was signed into law in 1970 to reduce air pollution and improve air quality, our nation's Gross Domestic Product has increased 210 percent while emissions of major pollutants have reduced by 71 percent.

“We must maintain our commitment to clean air and public health by supporting the strongest possible standard for soot,” said **Rep. Jan Schakowsky**. “We urge the EPA to take a stand for public health by cleaning up particle pollution and adopting strong limits on particle pollution that can dramatically improve human health.”

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Contact: Adjoa Adofo, (202) 225-2111

adjoa.adofo@mail.house.gov

