



Testimony of Bill Becker
Executive Director, National Association of Clean Air Agencies
Before the House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Regarding the FY 2015 Budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
April 10, 2014

Good morning. I am Bill Becker, Executive Director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies – or “NACAA.” NACAA is an association of air pollution control agencies in 42 states, D.C., four territories and 116 metropolitan areas throughout the country. These agencies have the “primary responsibility” under the Clean Air Act for implementing our nation’s clean air programs. NACAA has three recommendations on the President’s FY 2015 budget: 1) that grants to state and local air quality agencies under the Clean Air Act be *increased* \$50 million over last year’s appropriation, or \$35 million above the President’s FY 2015 request; 2) that state and local agencies be provided with the flexibility to determine *how best* to use any additional resources; and 3) that grants for monitoring fine particulate matter remain under Section 103 authority, rather than Section 105, where additional *matching* funds would be required. I will briefly touch on each request.

First, with respect to the *amount* of the grants, the President’s budget calls for increased federal funding for state and local air quality agencies of \$15 million over FY 2014 levels. Within the request, there is a proposed *increase* of \$24.3 million for implementing new *greenhouse gas* requirements, but a proposed *cut* of \$9.3 million from our “core” programs, which represent the foundation of our air pollution control efforts.

We are pleased that the President’s budget recognizes the importance of laying the

groundwork to develop plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These programs will be complex and resource-intensive and will require that agencies, among other things, 1) collect and review greenhouse gas emissions data, 2) implement state and local permitting programs for new and existing facilities, 3) continue to meet with stakeholders in their communities to ensure forthcoming rules are fair and flexible, and 4) begin to develop implementation strategies consistent with the federal guidelines.

At issue, however, is that the President's budget proposes to fund these greenhouse gas initiatives, in large part, at the expense of our ongoing clean air implementation efforts—our “core” programs. As I mentioned, the President's budget proposes to cut these programs by \$9.3 million.

These “core” programs are critical. The sad fact is more people die or get sick from air pollution than from almost any other environmental or domestic problem facing this nation. Tens of thousands of people die prematurely each year in this country, and millions of others suffer serious health problems as a result of exposure to such air pollutants as particulate matter, ozone, and hundreds of toxic compounds. State and local air pollution control officials are working tirelessly, and without sufficient resources, to implement the Clean Air Act. On a day-to-day basis, as part of their “core” programs, our agencies 1) compile emissions inventories, 2) carry out complex modeling, 3) analyze extensive data, 4) develop State Implementation Plans, 5) operate monitoring networks, 6) conduct periodic inspections, 7) take appropriate enforcement actions against non-complying facilities and 8) issue permits to covered facilities, including “minor” sources.

State and local air quality agencies have struggled with insufficient resources for many years. While the Clean Air Act envisioned the federal government providing grants for up to 60

percent of the cost of state and local air programs, the truth is that it provides only 25 percent, while state and local agencies provide the remaining 75 percent. A NACAA study revealed an annual shortfall of \$550 million in federal grants for state and local air quality programs. While we understand Congress is not able to provide increases of that magnitude, even the modest increases we are requesting will help.

Accordingly, we are asking for \$50 million above last year's levels, or \$35 million above the President's FY 2015 request.

Second, with respect to *flexibility*, we strongly believe that significant increases are needed for both greenhouse gas programs and ongoing "core activities." However, rather than target specific amounts for climate or for "core" activities, as the President's budget advocates, we recommend, instead, that Congress provide state and local air agencies the *flexibility* to use any additional grants for their highest priority efforts, that is, where they will do the most good. Some agencies may elect to spend some or their entire share of the increase on building greenhouse gas programs, while others may focus more on "core" programs. Regardless, that decision should be made by the state or locality.

Finally, with respect to fine particulate monitoring, EPA is again proposing to shift funds from Section 103 authority, where no match is needed, to Section 105, which would require additional matching funds. We are concerned that several agencies may have to refuse critically needed monitoring funds simply because they don't have the ability to match. We thank you for your responsiveness to this issue in the past, and we are asking for your support again this year. As you may know, our recommendation has no impact on funding levels in the federal budget.

In conclusion, NACAA urges Congress to 1) increase federal grants to state and local air agencies by \$35 million above the Administration's request; 2) provide flexibility to state and local air agencies to use any additional grants to address their highest priorities; and 3) retain grants for monitoring fine particulate matter under the authority of Section 103.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.