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S. William Becker

May 21, 2007

The Honorable Norman Dicks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Dicks and Tiahrt:

The House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies and the full Appropriations Committee are scheduled to mark up FY 2008 appropriations legislation that includes funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA) recommends that EPA grants within the State and Tribal Assistance Grant program for state and local air agencies under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act be increased in FY 2008 by \$80.5 million above the President's request, for a total of \$265.8 million. Additionally, NACAA recommends that grants for the particulate matter monitoring program not be shifted from Section 103 authority to Section 105 authority.

NACAA is the national association of clean air agencies in 54 states and territories and over 165 metropolitan areas across the country. The Clean Air Act gives these agencies the primary responsibility for implementing our nation's clean air program. Federal grants provide essential resources to support the efforts of state and local air agencies to achieve and maintain clean air and protect public health. These programs are extremely important in light of the fact that tens of thousands of people die each year as a result of air pollution and millions more are exposed to unhealthful levels of a variety of air contaminants.

The President's recommended budget for FY 2008 calls for significant reductions in grants to state and local air quality agencies – cuts of \$35.1 million (nearly 16 percent) from FY 2006 levels. These cuts come at a time when air quality agencies, which are already underfunded, need additional resources to meet their responsibilities to the public. Such reductions will have a damaging impact on their ability to protect air quality and public health in this country.

In February 2007, NACAA prepared an analysis of the impacts of the proposed FY 2008 budget cuts. The severity of the cuts is so substantial that, in many cases, state and local air agencies would have to lay off personnel and/or not fill staff vacancies. Many agencies would have to cease or curtail their existing monitoring programs. The reductions would hamper inspection and enforcement activities, making clean air requirements less effective. Additionally, permits for smaller sources will take longer to process and customer service will diminish. The cuts could seriously impair the ability of some agencies to prepare new plans for implementing ozone and fine particulate matter standards. Finally, some smaller agencies might even have to close down entirely, posing a terrible loss for those localities. The proposed reductions in our programs would be extremely detrimental to our efforts to reduce air pollution and maintain the improvements that we have worked so hard to achieve.

The cuts would be further exacerbated by the proposal to shift grants in the particulate matter monitoring program from Section 103 authority (which does not require a 40-percent match from state and local recipients) to Section 105 authority. Under the budget proposal, state and local agencies would need to supply additional “matching” funds in order to accept the federal monitoring grants. Some agencies do not currently have additional resources for the match and could be forced to turn away some much-needed grant funds.

On behalf of NACAA, I urge you to review our analysis to learn about the adverse impacts the proposed FY 2008 reductions would have on state and local efforts to protect public health. The report makes it clear that increases – rather than cuts – are necessary for these programs. NACAA's analysis, *Impacts of the President's Proposed FY 2008 Budget Cuts on State and Local Clean Air Programs* (February 26, 2007) was provided to you in February 2007 and is available at www.4cleanair.org/documents/FY2008budgetanalysisfinal022607.pdf. You may also wish to review a report NACAA prepared when similar reductions were proposed last year, providing state-by-state accounts of the serious impacts of such deep cuts. That report, *Impact of Proposed FY 2007 Budget Cuts on State and Local Air Quality Agencies* (March 14, 2006), is available at www.4cleanair.org/StateandLocalExamplesofImpactsofCuts.pdf.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. Please do not hesitate to contact NACAA if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,



S. William Becker

cc: House Appropriations Committee