

From: EPA Press Office <Press@epa.gov>

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To: EPA Press Office <Press@epa.gov>

Subject: Statement from EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan on EPA's approach to the power sector



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Contact: Press@epa.gov

WASHINGTON – EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan issued the following statement today on EPA's approach to the power sector:

"As EPA works towards final standards to cut climate pollution from existing coal and new gas-fired power plants later this spring, the Agency is taking a new, comprehensive approach to cover the entire fleet of natural gas-fired turbines, as well as cover more pollutants including climate, toxic and criteria air pollution," said Administrator Regan.

"This stronger, more durable approach will achieve greater emissions reductions than the current proposal. EPA proposals on criteria pollutants and air toxics also will help address local air quality impacts to better protect vulnerable frontline communities. This comprehensive approach to reducing climate and air pollution will also consider flexibilities to support grid operators and will recognize that ongoing technological innovation offers a wide range of decarbonization options. EPA will immediately begin a robust stakeholder engagement process, working with workers, communities with environmental justice concerns, and all interested parties to help create a more durable, flexible, and affordable proposal that protects public health and the environment."

Additional Background

The final rules that EPA will send to OMB soon will protect public health, reduce harmful pollutants, and deliver billions of dollars in climate and public health benefits. These final rules will cover existing coal-fired power plants that continue to be among the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector, while ensuring that new natural gas turbines are clean. EPA received more than 1.3 million comments and had extensive and productive discussions with many groups of stakeholders to develop effective and workable climate standards that follow the law and are based on available and cost-effective technologies.

What They Are Saying

Washington Governor Jay Inslee:

“This is excellent news from Administrator Regan, and I commend him for his continued leadership. We cannot mitigate emissions and pollution from power plants by ignoring our country’s largest source of electricity generation: existing gas plants. Washington state is eager to support EPA in undertaking this rulemaking as quickly as possible.”

Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth:

“I applaud the Biden Administration for once again prioritizing the inclusion of environmental justice communities into the rule making process. These ambitious GHG reductions will help benefit the communities that have been most impacted by toxic emissions, and Administrator Regan understands they must be at the table to inform these decisions as we shift to a greener tomorrow for all.”

Representative Kathy Castor:

“I commend the EPA for moving forward with historic power plant emissions rules that will reduce air pollution and save lives. Section 111 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires EPA to protect Americans from air pollution sources that endanger the public, and to listen to workers, frontline communities, and other stakeholders as it develops rules. EPA is making substantial progress after starting from scratch—following former President Trump’s roll back of air quality rules at the behest of polluters and the fossil fuel industry. Cleaner, cheaper energy is America’s future. And I look forward to working with EPA on new rules for existing gas-fired power plants so that Americans can breathe easier and avoid the worst consequences and growing costs of the climate crisis.”

Abigail Dillen, president of Earthjustice:

“Moving forward with standards for existing coal plants and new gas plants will address two burning priorities. Tackling dirty coal plants is one of the single most important moves the president and EPA can make to rein in climate pollution. As utilities propose new fossil gas plants, we absolutely have to get ahead of a big new pollution problem.”

Peggy Shepard, Co-Founder and Executive Director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice:

“We are pleased to see that the voices and considerations of environmental justice communities are being factored into this monumentally impactful area of environmental rulemaking. The EPA has a responsibility to our communities and to our future - the power sector is one of the top sources of carbon emissions and pollution - we have a limited amount of time to not only create an energy transition but also to do it the right way with clean and renewable sources and communities in mind. With this pause to take a deeper dive into developing the most comprehensive and thoughtful rulemaking for existing gas plants, we have an opportunity to do this work correctly and effectively to protect the human and environmental health of the most overburdened, neglected, and vulnerable people across the country - which in turn benefits everyone. We are wholly appreciative of the EPA’s leadership in demonstrating the need for further review, and at the same time request a clear and transparent process as we look forward to collaborating for its improved realization. Only when this rule is finalized can we truly know we are on a path to resilience and justice. Our movement being recognized and included in the EPA’s process will indeed create a world in which we don’t have to dare to breathe, but instead live and breathe more easily today and tomorrow.”

Dr. Beverly Wright, Founder and Executive Director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice:

"We are grateful to have EPA's leadership to reduce power plant pollution in a way that is protective of nearby communities. Power plants are disproportionately located near Black and other communities of color, and release massive amounts of pollution that cause asthma and contribute to climate change. Allowing these existing plants to employ carbon capture and storage or hydrogen co-firing would increase health risks and set back progress on renewable energy. We look forward to participating in regulations for existing power plants that advance environmental and climate justice."

Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy and Director of the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University:

"We applaud EPA for taking an important step toward mitigating pollution from the fossil fuel power generation sector, and we implore the agency to go further down this path. Curtailing pollution is of the utmost urgency as communities of color and low-wealth struggle under the weight of historical and continued pollution and injustice. We call on the EPA to continue enacting anti-racist policies that result in real justice for real people. We don't need any false solutions like hydrogen and carbon capture that will add to the pollution burden that already exists in our communities. Instead, we need only those solutions that improve environmental conditions for the most vulnerable people."

Dr. Ana Baptista, Co-Director of the Tishman Environment & Design Center at The New School and Associate Professor at The New School University:

"US EPA's decision to address existing natural gas plants in a supplemental rulemaking process is a critical opportunity to take up the substantive environmental justice concerns voiced by communities in the comment period. A large majority of natural gas plants contribute to the existing, disproportionate burdens already faced by environmental justice communities. This decision allows for a more comprehensive approach to tackling both climate change and the cumulative impacts that these plants pose to overburdened communities."

Dr. Nicky Sheats, Ph.D, MPP, Esq., Director, Center for the Urban Environment at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University:

"In addition to fighting climate change, climate change mitigation policy should be used to improve the health of communities by improving local air quality. Re-considering the portion of the power plants rule that applies to existing natural gas plants will provide EPA with more opportunity to ensure that overburdened environmental justice communities are not sacrificed as the nation fights climate change. We need to make sure the rule does, in fact, improve local air quality in these communities and does not make it worse."

Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr., President and CEO, Hip Hop Caucus:

"The rule as proposed did not address the concerns of environmental justice communities. Therefore, it is encouraging to see the EPA and Biden Administration pause to reflect on environmental justice needs rather than push out regulations that do not address the climate crisis, as it is a racial justice matter. We look forward to continuing to engage on this existing gas plant rule and others to ensure community concerns are uplifted and harmful impacts are addressed."

Maria Lopez-Nuñez, Deputy Director, Organizing and Advocacy, Ironbound Community Corporation:

"Environmental Justice communities can breathe a little bit easier with this delay in the release of the 'New Source Performance Standards for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from New, Modified, and Reconstructed Fossil Fuel–Fired Electric Generating Units (EGU); Emissions Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Existing Fossil Fuel–Fired Electric Generating Units.' We are hopeful that this delay will allow a reconsideration that fully embraces Environmental Justice in order to ensure healthy outcomes for our communities."

Melissa Miles, Executive Director, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance:

"Delaying the existing natural gas plants part of the power plants rule will give EPA a better opportunity to make sure the rule helps environmental justice communities in their fight to improve local air quality. There needs to be protections in the rule to ensure that environmental justice communities already overburdened by air pollution are not further burdened by this rule."

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