

TESTIMONY OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS  
IN OPPOSITION TO  
S.131 - THE CLEAR SKIES ACT OF 2005

February 2, 2005

As representatives of Christian denominations, we are called to express our grave moral concerns with the proposed changes to the Clean Air Act. After careful review of S.131, the Clear Skies Act of 2005, we believe the legislation delays the critical action necessary to clean up our nation's air and fails altogether to address the real and present threat of global warming. We urge this committee to adopt amendments that would strengthen standards, speed up implementation, and control emissions of carbon dioxide.

We believe clean air is a basic right and necessity for all life. Our faith teaches that human beings are stewards of God's creation. Unfortunately, we have too often abandoned this sacred responsibility at the altar of human consumption, arrogance and greed, leaving a legacy of pollution that threatens the health of communities and the very future of our planet. Today, we call on our elected leaders to reverse this legacy and enact bold legislation to reduce dramatically the emissions from power plants – the single largest stationary source of air pollution in the United States.

We believe the costs associated with delay and inaction are unacceptable. The tragic toll of premature deaths, asthma attacks, lost days of school and work, polluted waterways and rising global temperatures is the result of an energy policy that is neither just nor moral. The heaviest toll is paid by the most vulnerable in our society including the poor, the elderly, children and pregnant women. Our faith calls us to speak out on their behalf and oppose legislation that would delay efforts to alleviate their suffering.

We have embarked on a campaign within the religious community to educate and mobilize people of faith on the issue of air pollution. In the last year, we have encouraged our 100,000 congregations across the country to reflect on God's sacred gift of air by providing them with theological statements, worship materials, study guides and prayers. In addition, many of our denominations have adopted policy principles on power plant pollution and remain committed to supporting legislation that fulfills our biblically mandated responsibilities of stewardship and justice.

In the Bible, the epistle James teaches us that faith without works is dead. It is not enough to simply proclaim respect and love for God's created world, we must live out that faith through our actions. Today, we call on our elected leaders to join us in defending God's creation by enacting strict emissions controls that will clean the air sooner rather than later and address the impending climate crisis.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns and we look forward to working with the committee to enact meaningful legislation this year.

Sincerely,

Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell  
Associate General Secretary for Justice and Advocacy  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory  
Director  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office

Maureen Shea  
Director  
The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations

Rev. Ron Stief  
Minister and Team Leader  
Washington Office  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries

Karen S. Vagley  
Director – Washington Office  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Jim Winkler  
General Secretary  
General Board of Church and Society  
The United Methodist Church