



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America



July 20, 2015

Dear Senator:

The undersigned public health and medical organizations urge you to oppose S. 1324, the “Affordable and Reliable Electricity Now Act (ARENA) of 2015.” This bill would put lives at risk by delaying and blocking critical clean air protections.

Carbon pollution leads to climate change that threatens Americans’ health. As U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA, said during 2015 National Public Health Week, “We know that climate change means higher temperatures overall, and it also means longer and hotter heat waves... higher temperatures can mean worse air in cities, and more smog and more ozone. We know that more intense wildfires will mean increased smoke in the air. And we know that earlier springs and longer summers mean longer allergy seasons.”

These impacts of climate change are already contributing to asthma attacks and other respiratory problems, cases of heat stroke, and premature deaths. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed Clean Power Plan will help the nation take important steps toward protecting Americans’ health from these threats. Not only would the Clean Power Plan give states flexible tools to reduce the carbon pollution that causes climate change, these crucial tools would also lower other deadly pollutants at the same time, preventing up to 6,600 premature deaths and 150,000 asthma attacks every year by 2030.

S. 1324 would put lives at risk by gutting vital Clean Air Act safeguards. The bill would allow governors to “opt out” of complying with the final Clean Power Plan. Moreover, the bill would prevent EPA from putting a federal pollution cleanup plan in place in a state where a governor refused to comply. Residents of these states – especially those most vulnerable, including children, the elderly, and people with asthma – would not see the health benefits from air pollution reductions that would come with the cleanup plan. And neighboring states would continue to bear the burden of pollution that blows across state boundaries.

The bill would also prohibit EPA from implementing the Clean Power Plan until all court actions related to the plan are complete, potentially indefinitely delaying these lifesaving protections. And in addition to blocking carbon pollution limits for existing power plants, the bill would also essentially block EPA’s efforts to limit greenhouse gasses (including carbon) from new power plants by putting industry, not health scientists at EPA, in charge.

S. 1324 would also explicitly invalidate EPA’s proposed standards for new and existing power plants, and rewrite the Clean Air Act so that EPA must choose between cleaning up carbon pollution or mercury and air toxics from existing power plants. Public health requires that all pollution from power plants must be cut to protect the health of millions of Americans.

Please prioritize the health of your constituents and vote NO on S. 1324.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network

American Lung Association

American Public Health Association

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Health Care Without Harm

National Environmental Health Association

Trust for America's Health