

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.)
Reality Check Part II: The Impact of EPA's Proposed Ozone Standards on Rural America

Chairman Bridenstine: Good afternoon and welcome to this afternoon's hearing entitled: "Reality Check Part II: The Impact of EPA's Proposed Ozone Standards on Rural America"

It is Congress' responsibility to provide oversight of the executive branch, and that means we must carefully review the impact and achievability of this proposed regulation. I am deeply concerned lowering the standards at this time will have a negative impact, particularly on rural America.

Ozone levels and emissions of volatile organic compounds have significantly decreased over the past few decades. Furthermore, according to EPA's own data, their "projections show the vast majority of U.S. counties would meet the proposed standards by 2025 just with the rules and programs now in place or under way." In other words, ozone levels will continue decreasing without doing anything else.

However, it is concerning that the EPA is moving the goalposts and proposing to tighten the standards without first fully implementing the existing 2008 standard. The guidance for state implementation plans was only released earlier this year by the EPA. States have not even been given a chance to comply with the existing standard.

Last month, the Full Committee held a hearing to examine this complicated and massive regulation that will impact almost every sector and individual in the United States. According to Dr. Allen Lefohn, who testified at last month's hearing, it is his expert opinion that the EPA Administrator is relying solely on one 2009 study of 31 participants in order to scientifically justify the costliest regulation in the history of this country.

Just so everyone understands how massive this rule is, a February 2015 analysis by NERA Economic Consulting finds that GDP will be reduced by \$1.7 trillion between 2017 and 2040, our economy will have 1.4 million less jobs, and households will lose an average of \$830 per year.

Another troubling issue is one of natural or background ozone. With these low proposed standards, background ozone may become the main contributor to exceedances of the standard all across the United States. States will be held responsible for factors outside of their control.

According to the Western States Air Resources Council, there are numerous national parks in the western United States with ozone monitors that regularly record concentrations which exceed the proposed range of 65-70 parts per billion, and some that even exceed the existing 75 ppb standard. As this figure shows (FIGURE 1), monitored ozone levels at rural sites in the west have stayed relatively flat. It is possible that all 11 of these areas would be considered in non-attainment under this new

proposal. This would include Yellowstone National Park! There is no way this was Congress' intent when it passed the Clean Air Act over 4 decades ago.

Two sectors of the economy that will be heavily impacted by this rule are agriculture and transportation. These are incredibly vital to my home state of Oklahoma, and I look forward to discussing more in detail with our witnesses.

Rural areas, like a lot of my state, will be especially hit hard by the Clean Air Act's transportation conformity requirements. A classification of non-attainment would mean that the federal government can withhold federal highway funds for projects and plans if the individual projects do not meet specific emissions and air quality standards.

Those who bear a regulation's compliance costs may also suffer a decline in their health status, and these increased risks might be greater than the direct benefits of the regulation. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the EPA did not include premature deaths and increased mortality caused by the loss of disposable income when considering this proposed rule.

Low-income Americans and senior citizens living on fixed incomes may be forced to choose between medications, food, or paying for heat and electricity. This is a continuation of this administration's "war on the poor," to go along with the Clean Power Plan and other existing and proposed EPA regulations.

Supporters of the EPA's agenda will say opposition amounts to opposing clean air. This could not be farther from the truth. My home state is in attainment, and has been for years, and even still, efforts are being made to further reduce ozone and other emissions. I am extremely proud of the work done by our state and local leaders. Even with their efforts, a new rule would plunge many areas into nonattainment.

This is all the more reason why any proposed rule should not be decided in a hasty and hurried manner, especially since the impact of this rule will be widespread and affect every American.

I want to thank each of the witnesses for coming this afternoon and I look forward to hearing from you.

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