

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2008

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Johnson,

We are writing to express our concerns with a proposed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule that would weaken clean air protections for national parks, wilderness areas and other scenic lands afforded special protection under the Clean Air Act (known as "Class I areas").

The rule proposed by EPA in June 2007 (EPA-HQ-OAR-2006-0888) purports merely to clarify the way in which pollution levels in Class I areas are measured. However, analyses by the National Park Service and EPA's regional air quality experts demonstrate that the proposed changes would result in a significant undercounting of actual pollution sources, such as coal-fired power plants, permitting them to emit more pollution into national parks and wilderness areas.

For these reasons, the National Park Service and every EPA regional office oppose the changes EPA has proposed. The National Park Service says the proposed rule "provides the lowest possible degree of protection" for air quality in Class I areas. EPA air quality experts have complained that the proposal is "grossly inadequate," based on "false assumptions" and "full of errors," and have said that it will "jeopardize protection" of Class I air quality.

Congress made a firm commitment to protect air quality in America's national parks and wilderness areas so that visitors can enjoy clear skies and healthy air. If EPA puts Class I air quality at risk by adopting this flawed rulemaking, we will pursue legislative options to restore the full level of protection provided by the Clean Air Act.

We urge you to withdraw this rulemaking now to avoid a legacy of dirty air in our national parks and wilderness areas.

Sincerely,




Lamar Alexander
United States Senator

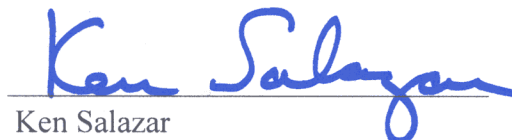



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cc: The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior