

# Congress: Give us the right tools for the job!

BY GLENN ENGLISH

The federal Clean Air Act was passed to control specific pollutants on a local scale, but during 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that the term “pollutant” in the Clean Air Act could include carbon dioxide – and required the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make the call on whether or not to clarify carbon as a threat.

One of the main authors of the most recent version of the Clean Air Act, U.S. Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., warned that using the Act to regulate carbon dioxide, which was never considered by Congress, would result in a “glorious mess.”

Ignoring that concern, late last year EPA announced it would include carbon dioxide in a list of pollutants contributing to climate change to be regulated under the Clean Air Act. It seems that “glorious mess” indeed could become a reality.

The Clean Air Act in its modern form originally was passed in 1970 to control harmful pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide on a local and regional level. In every case where these emissions fell under federal regulation, proven technology existed to address the goals of the legislation.

When it comes to carbon dioxide emissions from coal- and natural gas-fired power plants, no such solution currently exists. Experts estimate at least a decade of research must be conducted – on a massive scale – on promising technologies like carbon capture and storage before a viable approach to limiting carbon dioxide gas from smokestack emissions can be found.

This could lead to higher electric bills and an economic train wreck.

The Clean Air Act wasn’t intended to deal with carbon dioxide. It was tailored to curb harmful pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which it does effectively. Using it to regulate greenhouse gas emissions would essentially be like using a hammer to tighten a screw; you may eventually get that screw hammered in, but using the right tool makes more sense and does the job

without unintended harm.

Electric cooperatives have been fighting to make sure any energy or climate change policy remains fair, affordable and achievable. Much of this effort so far has been focused on legislation being considered by Congress, but the EPA’s actions have opened a new front in the fight.

Iowa’s electric cooperatives are asking you to make your voice heard in preventing the EPA from doing something Congress never intended. Reach out to your elected officials in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, and ask them to support fellow members of Congress who are doing important bipartisan work to prevent EPA from regulating greenhouse gas emissions under the federal Clean Air Act. Urge them to sign on to the Murkowski-Lincoln resolution (S.J.RES. 26) in the Senate, as well as the Skelton-Emerson-Peterson bill (H.R. 4572) or Pomeroy bill (H.R. 4396) in the House.

Together, we can make a stand that will help ensure an affordable energy future – and prevent an economic disaster for all of us. Please visit the Our Energy, Our Future™ Web site at [www.ourenergy.coop](http://www.ourenergy.coop) today to send that message to Congress. 🌱



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