

RECORD STATEMENT
THE HONORABLE GEORGE L. GRACE
MAYOR, ST. GABRIEL, LOUISIANA
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS

JULY 11, 2007

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CLEAN AIR, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NUCLEAR
SAFETY, FISHERIES WILDLIFE AND WATER

CHAIRMAN CARPER, RANKING MEMBER VOINOVICH, DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE.

GOOD MORNING.

I AM GEORGE L. GRACE, MAYOR, ST GABRIEL, LOUISIANA, AND PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS (NCBM).

MR. CHAIRMAN, ON BEHALF OF ITS MORE THAN 600 MEMBER MAYORS, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOUR SUBCOMMITTEE THIS MORNING TO SHARE WITH YOU OUR VIEWS AND CONCERNS REGARDING THE US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY'S RECENTLY ANNOUNCED NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (NPRM) TO REVIEW THE NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD (NAAQS) FOR OZONE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, WITHOUT OBJECTION I WILL SUMMARIZE THE MAIN POINTS OF MY RECORD STATEMENT AND ATTEMPT TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU OR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE.

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY MAKING THREE POINTS.

FIRST, THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS SUPPORTS EPA REGULATORY POLICIES THAT ARE INENDED TO IMPROVE OUR NATION'S AIR QUALITY IN A MANNER THAT IS COST-EFFECTIVE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES AND BASED ON SOUND SCIENCE.

SECOND, BECAUSE OF SUCH EPA POLICIES, AND THE COORDINATED EFFORTS OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND INDUSTRY, SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS IN MEETING THE CLEAN AIR ACT'S AIR QUALITY GOALS. WHILE MORE PROGRESS IS NEEDED IN SELECTED AREAS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WE SHOULD MAKE NO MISTATKE THAT THE CLEAN AIR ACT IS WORKING AS IT WAS INTENDED. EPA'S OWN DATA SHOW THAT BETWEEN 1970 AND 2006, TOTAL EMISSIONS OF THE SIX PRINCIPAL AIR POLLUTANTS DROPPED BY 54 PERCENT.

LASTLY, THE NCBM IS, HOWEVER, DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITIES WE REPRESENT, SHOULD EPA DECIDE IN ITS FINAL RULING TO ADOPT A MORE STRINGENT NAAQS STANDARD FOR OZONE.

IN SPECIFIC REGARD TO LOUISIANA, MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT CURRENTLY, THERE ARE ONLY 5 PARISHES CLASSIFIED AS NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE. UNDER EITHER OF THE PROPOSED NEW STANDARDS UNDER CONSIDERATION OVER HALF OF THE 64 PARISHES IN THE STATE COULD BE RECLASSIFIED AS NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE.

AS I AM SURE YOU ARE AWARE, THE DESIGNATION OF A COUNTY (OR PARISH) AS NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE TRIGGERS A SECOND PROCESS IN WHICH AFFECTED STATES MUST DEVELOP AND SUBMIT TO EPA A STATE

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SIP) THAT DEMONSTRATES COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEW STANDARD WITHIN A CERTAIN TIME FRAME. THE EMISSION CONTROL STRATEGIES REQUIRED TO MAKE SUCH A DEMONSTRATION WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT THE ECONOMIES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING JOBS AND FUTURE GROWTH.

MANY PARISHES ACROSS OUR STATE WILL, FOR THE FIRST TIME EXPERIENCE THE STIGMA AND COMPLIANCE CHALLENGES OF BEING DESIGNATED NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE. MOREOVER, THOSE PARISHES THAT ARE CURRENTLY DESIGNATED AS BEING NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE WILL BE FACED WITH IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING EVEN MORE DEMANDING COMPLIANCE STRATEGIES, EVEN BEFORE THEY HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT FULLY, THE PLANS ON WHICH THEY ARE NOW WORKING TO COMPLY WITH THE PRESENT 0.08 PPM STANDARD.

THE SITUATION IN LOUISIANA IS REPRESENTATIVE OF WHAT MANY OF OUR MEMBER MAYORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WILL BE FACING SHOULD THE OZONE STANDARD BE MADE MORE STRINGENT.

ALABAMA, FOR EXAMPLE, CURRENTLY HAS ONLY TWO OF THE STATE'S 67 COUNTIES DESIGNATED AS NON-ATTAINMENT FOR OZONE. THIS NUMBER COULD INCREASE TO OVER HALF OF THE STATE'S COUNTIES DEPENDING UPON WHICH NEW STANDARD IS CHOSEN.

SIMILARLY, IN MISSISSIPPI, UP TO ONE THIRD OF THE STATE'S 82 COUNTIES WOULD BECOME NON-ATTAINMENT, AGAIN, DEPENDING UPON WHICH STANDARD IS CHOSEN.

THE IMPACT OF BEING DESIGNATED NON-ATTAINMENT WILL ALSO HAVE A DISPARATE IMPACT ON THOSE COMMUNITIES UNDERTAKING ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION EFFORTS AND REBUILDING, LIKE THOSE IN THE GULF COAST IN THE AFTERMATH OF KATRINA. SUCH IMPACTS MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN THE FORM OF INCREASED COSTS TO INDUSTRY, PERMITTING DELAYS, RESTRICTIONS ON INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION WITHIN AN AREA, IMPACTS ON TRANSPORTATION PLANNING, INCREASED COSTS TO CONSUMERS AND FOR COMMERCIAL AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS. THIS RESULTS IN CONTINUING OVERSIGHT BY EPA AT THE LOCAL LEVEL UNTIL THE AREA HAS MET AND MAINTAINED THIS STANDARD FOR THE REQUIRED PERIOD OF YEARS. THESE ASPECTS HAVE VERY REAL IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES.

I HAVE HEARD SOME SAY THAT AT THE LEVELS BEING PROPOSED, ATTAINMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE STANDARD WILL BE OUT OF REACH FOR MOST INDUSTRIALIZED STATES.

WE SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD TO JEAPORDIZE THE PROGRESS BEING MADE IN THE SOUTH, AS WELL AS THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.

AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS ANNUAL MEETING, WE ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY A RESOLUTION CALLING UPON EPA TO INCLUDE AMONG ITS POLICY OPTIONS, CONSIDERATION OF RETAINING THE CURRENT 0.08 PPM STANDARD. I AM PROVIDING A COPY OF THAT RESOLUTION FOR THE RECORD.

IN CLOSING, MR. CHAIRMAN, THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS IS COMMITTED TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT AND IMPROVED AIR QUALITY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES. HOWEVER, I'D LIKE TO STRESS THAT AIR QUALITY IS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT IMPACTS THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE WE REPRESENT. THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF OUR COMMUNITIES IS ALSO DEPENDANT ON HAVING GOOD JOBS, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE THAT GOES WITH IT.

ACCORDINGLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A FULL AND FAIR DISCUSSION OF THE AIR QUALITY PROGRESS WE HAVE ACHIEVED TO DATE, AND THE HEALTH AND WELFARE ASPECTS OF THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS TO OUR COMMUNITIES.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK MAYORS INTENDS TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS ASSOCIATED WITH EPA'S PROPOSED RULE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CURRENT STANDARD SHOULD NOT BE MADE MORE STRINGENT AT THIS TIME AND WILL URGE EPA TO MAKE A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF OUR AIR QUALITY NEEDS AND GIVE

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CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACT OF A LOWER STANDARD ON OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND THE WELFARE OF THOSE WHO WORK AND LIVE THERE, INCLUDING THE SMALL AND MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES THAT OPERATE AND PROVIDE SERVICES IN THESE AREAS.

THANK YOU AGAIN, MR. CHAIRMAN.

I WILL BE HAPPY TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE.