STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY
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THE HOUSE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday April 16, 2013

RE: Fiscal Year 2014 Budget
Summary: EPA Funding Recommendations (Dollars in Millions)

Science and Technology	
Clean Air and Climate	**140.0**
Indoor Air and Radiation	**10.0**
Research	
Air, Climate and Energy	**115.0**
Environmental Program & Management	
Clean Air and Climate	**320.0**
Indoor Air and Radiation	**38.0**
EPA Budget - total	**8,600.0**

The American Thoracic Society appreciates the opportunity to testify before the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the FY2014 budget of the Environmental Protection Agency. The Environmental Protection Agency is charged with the mission of protecting Americans from pollution in the nation's air, water and land. This is an important mission and one that deserves financial resources commensurate with the task.

I am Dorr Dearborn MD and I am the Chairman of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences and Director of the Swetland Center for Environmental Health at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Medicine. Additionally, I am a professor of Pediatrics in the pulmonary division of the Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital of Cleveland. Today, I am speaking on behalf of the American Thoracic Society. The American Thoracic Society, founded in 1905, is an independently incorporated, international education and scientific society which focuses on respiratory and critical care medicine. The Society's members help prevent and fight respiratory disease around the globe through research, education, patient care and advocacy. The Society's long-range goal is to decrease morbidity and mortality from respiratory disorders and life-threatening acute illnesses.

As such, we have a keen interest in the impact that EPA's regulatory and enforcement actions have on respiratory health.

Nearly all lung diseases are impacted by air pollution. How well or poorly our lungs perform is contingent on the quality of the air around us, making the impact of air pollution inescapable. Air pollution remains a primary contributor to the high prevalence of respiratory diseases.

For over 100 years, the American Thoracic Society has conducted scientific, public health and educational programs to fight air pollution and to improve the quality of the air that we breathe. We remain strong supporters of the Clean Air Act and its amendments. We can attest to the significant impact that the Clean Air Act has had in improving the quality of our nation's air.

Cleaning up our nation's air is having a profound impact on public health and health expenditures. EPA recently released a report noting that the Clean Air Act yields $30 in savings for every one dollar spent to control air pollution. In 2010 the Clean Air Act prevented 160,000 premature deaths, 1.7 million asthma attacks, 86,000 emergency room visits, and 130,000 heart attacks. The EPA report builds on a similar cost benefit analysis done by the Office of Management and Budget during the Bush Administration that also showed that the Clean Air Act standards were an economic benefit for the U.S.

While the economic story of the Clean Air Act is impressive, it is the human story that matters most. Every heart attack prevented and every asthma attack averted mean less economic demands on our health care system. It also means that somebody's loved one is still alive, still healthy, and still being a productive part of the community.

The Clean Air Act has made great strides; however, much remains to be done. It is estimated that one in 10 Americans live in areas that consistently violate EPA standards for ozone and particulate matter pollution, while nearly one third of Americans live in areas that have incurred violations for short-term ozone. Research has shown that air pollution is causing the premature death of literally thousands of people each year due to complications from exposure to air pollution.

EPA and Research Funding: Air pollution has an adverse impact on the health of Americans. The good news is that, as a direct result of EPA's action, America's air is cleaner today than in previous years. The bad news is that our scientific understanding of air pollution has advanced so that we can more fully comprehend the pernicious effects of air pollution at lower levels. In addition to higher death rates for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, research has also shed light on more subtle health effects influenced by air pollution such as lower birth weight and loss of IQ points.

Continued research on the health effects of air pollution is essential to help parents understand how air pollution may impact their children with asthma; for clinicians trying to manage patients with chronic respiratory disease; and to help guide EPA staff and the Administrator to set NAAQS standards at the appropriate level to protect public health.

In order to sustain these critical research efforts, the American Thoracic Society recommends an increase in funds for the EPA Office of Research and Development Clean Air research-related programs.

EPA and NAAQS Monitoring: In addition to establishing standards for air pollution limits, the EPA is also charged with developing and maintaining a network of monitors that measure the level of pollution in our nation's air. Unfortunately, we know the current monitoring network is inadequate. There are not enough monitors to accurately gauge air pollution associated with highways and other high traffic areas. This means that we are effectively underestimating the pollution that we are exposed to, and hence, under-appreciating the risk air pollution poses to our nation's health.

Additionally, the existing monitoring network relies on outdated technologies. With appropriate funding, a new generation of air pollution monitoring could be implemented that would improve the timeliness of air pollution monitoring and more rapidly make that information available to the public. New monitoring systems could make use of improved individual monitors and harness the power of satellite imagery and monitoring to replace the current outdated monitoring network. The American Thoracic Society strongly urges Congress to provide EPA the funds necessary to upgrade the air pollution monitoring network.

EPA and Diesel Retro Fits and Radon Program: The American Thoracic Society is concerned that the President's budget has proposed cutting the EPA diesel retro fit program by 50%. As you probably know, the program provides grants to state and local governments to upgrade diesel engines in school buses, trucks and other types of transit. By adopting the latest diesel engine technology, cities and states can significantly reduce the air pollution in their community. We are also concerned with the proposal to eliminate the radon program. We note that the President has proposed similar reduction in previous budgets, which Congress has rejected. We urge Congress to again restore the EPA diesel retro fit program and the radon program.

EPA Standard Setting – Tier 3 Standard. EPA recently issued new standards for vehicle emissions and fuel standards. This suite of rules, called the Tier 3 standard, will make dramatic improvements in air quality across the U.S. Basically, the proposed rules include two separate but related actions. The first action is to lower the allowable sulfur content in gasoline from 30 ppm to 10 ppm – creating a national fuel standard that is harmonized with the California standard. Sulfur in gasoline has two negative effects: first, it is burned and emitted as a pollutant that contributes to air pollution; second, sulfur essentially "poisons" catalytic converters – making them less efficient and requiring automatics to use pollution control technology that overcomes the sulfur content in gasoline.

Reducing sulfur in gasoline will have the immediate impact of making all vehicles emit less pollution, thereby immediately improving air pollution. EPA estimates that when fully implemented, reducing fuel sulfur content will have the effect of removing the tailpipe emissions of the 33 million vehicles from the road. The reduced tailpipe emissions will help many communities that are currently struggling to meet EPA air quality standards.

Lowering sulfur will also allow automakers to design engines and pollution control systems specifically designed to burn low sulfur gasoline. These new engines and pollution control systems will be even more effective than current systems– thus enabling future vehicles that emit even less tailpipe emissions.

The Tier 3 standard will make today's cars burn cleaner and allow tomorrow's cars to be even cleaner. We will all benefit from the Tier 3 rule.

EPA and Congress: Despite the many important steps EPA is taking to reduce air pollution and improve our nation's health, Congress seems intent on blocking EPA's efforts. The House of Representatives has repeatedly passed legislation to block, impair, or delay EPA efforts to implement health based rules under the Clean Air Act. We urge the House of Representatives to reconsider its position on EPA regulations. The American Thoracic Society strongly urges this subcommittee to refrain from adopting legislative riders in the fiscal year 2014 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill that would weaken or delay EPA's authority to implement Clean Air Act rules.

EPA and Climate Change: The ATS believe climate change is real and requires an immediate response. While still preliminary, there is sufficient research documenting the severe adverse human health effects climate change will bring. Research has demonstrated the spread of malaria to higher elevations due to rising temperatures. Research has also documented that higher concentrations of CO2, higher heat and a lengthened spring will mean more intense, prolonged, and severe pollen season for patients with pollen allergies. Higher temperatures will increase heat-related deaths in both major US cities and rural areas.

We also believe that the success of the EPA Clean Air Act holds valuable lessons for Congress and the EPA as it considers climate change. The technology used to reduce traditional pollutants like ozone and particulate matter can also be used to address greenhouse gas emissions.

The American Thoracic Society is playing an active role in addressing global climate change. In May 2010, the American Thoracic Society hosted a workshop on the respiratory health effects of global climate change. The workshop report was published in the March 15, 2012 issue of the Proceedings of the American Thoracic Society. The report provides guidance on the known and likely respiratory health effects of climate change as well as posing valuable research questions to further our understanding of how climate change is impacting human health. The American Thoracic Society is pleased to share a copy of this report with the Subcommittee.

On behalf of the American Thoracic Society, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the FY14 budget for the Environmental Protection Agency.