

**Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment,  
Manufacturing, and Critical Materials:**  
**“Safeguarding American Prosperity and People’s Livelihoods:  
Legislation to Modernize Air Quality Standards”**  
**Opening Statement**  
**February 15, 2024**  
*As prepared for delivery*

For decades, America has been the best place to do business, and we have the best air quality in the world.

We’re also ensuring we have some of the highest environmental standards in the world.

America has done more to lift people out of poverty and raise the standard of living than any other nation in the world.

Unfortunately, that prosperity and opportunity is being threatened.

The number one barrier to getting anything done in the U.S. is permitting—it takes seven years on average to permit new projects.

Last week, the Biden administration’s EPA finalized a standard on fine particulate matter—or PM 2.5...

...a decision that will be devastating for American manufacturing, people’s livelihoods, and our economic leadership.

This new rule goes well beyond the original congressional intent first laid out in the Clean Air Act, which stated goal was to promote [quote] “reasonable actions” to limit or reduce emissions and pollution.

The administration’s process to develop this latest rule was rushed, lacked transparency, and failed to incorporate feedback from stakeholders across the country who will be impacted the hardest.

With EPA’s nearly 150 proposed major rules, it’s just the latest example of President Biden’s extreme environmental agenda that is going to devastate our communities.

As we will hear today, the EPA’s decision to finalize these unrealistic standards will result in far-reaching consequences for the economy.

The harm would extend to nearly every sector of our economy, including manufacturing, power, agriculture, construction, and forestry...

...jeopardize hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. economic activity and millions of jobs...

...and make it nearly impossible to build new manufacturing facilities, making efforts to secure our supply chains and reduce our dependence on countries like China nearly impossible.

By all measures, the nation's air quality has improved dramatically since the Clean Air Act was enacted and current standards are improving quality even more.

The EPA itself has already concluded that the current standards are protective of public health...

...and has reported that total emissions of criteria air pollutants have dropped 73 percent since 1980.

The data is clear, U.S. air quality is the best in the world... and only getting better.

Despite this progress, the Biden EPA is taking steps to introduce these new standards that are completely divorced from reality to appease his radical base.

Instead of more harmful regulations, what we need are reasonable solutions that appropriately balance protecting our environment...

...while ensuring America continues to maintain its economic leadership.

That's the approach we've taken for decades... and it's worked.

As our air gets cleaner, the Clean Air Act provisions that were established decades ago, when air quality was much worse, should be revisited.

We learned in our September hearing that as new PM standards get closer to natural background levels there's less room for traditional industrial sources to get permits or further cut their emissions.

But the EPA's new, stricter standards completely ignore this fact.

Under those standards, permitting new economic development will be nearly impossible.

This will severely hinder new manufacturing projects, including pulp and paper, steel, cement, the automotive sector, advanced batteries, and even pharmaceuticals.

States will be forced to limit new economic activity for the communities that need them most.

Additionally, limits in the current law prevent states from addressing other, naturally occurring sources of pollution, such as wildfires.

We must update air quality standards responsibly in a way that reflects reality.

The discussion draft under consideration today will ensure that measures to implement health protections are realistic and balanced in their approach.

It will enable more orderly and reasonable requirements that states can actually implement.

It will ensure regulators follow the law when considering how to promote healthy communities, taking into account things like adverse public health, welfare, social, economic, and energy impacts.

It will also make it easier to reduce wildfire risk—something that is especially important for my home state of Washington.

Protecting our environment and our economy are not mutually exclusive goals, but in order to achieve both we must rethink how we address pollution levels that are outside our control.

This discussion draft is a good starting point to maintain America's economic leadership and ensure public health.

I look forward to today's discussion and I yield back.