



**Statement from Dr. Jeffrey Levi, Executive Director, Trust for American's Health  
Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee Press Event  
Thursday, March 10, 2011 at 11:00 a.m.**

Good morning. My name is Dr. Jeffrey Levi and I'm the Executive Director of Trust for America's Health or TFAH. Many thanks to Chairwoman Boxer and members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee for this opportunity to offer remarks on the importance of the Clean Air Act and the work of the Environmental Protection Agency.

TFAH is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health advocacy organization dedicated to saving lives by making disease prevention a national priority.

To simply say that this country has a chronic disease problem would be an understatement of epidemic proportions. Today, more than half of all Americans live with one or more chronic diseases or conditions -- many of which are linked to or exacerbated by the quality of the air we breathe. More than 75 percent of the approximately \$2.4 trillion dollars spent on health care in this country every year is spent on chronic disease patients, with much of it paid by public insurance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

The burden of chronic disease is a threat to the federal budget, American competitiveness, and our quality of life. For over 40 years, the EPA, operating under the Clean Air Act, has been working to protect American families from harmful air pollution and associated health effects, most notably cardiovascular and respiratory chronic diseases.

We are therefore incredibly concerned that legislative proposals to restrict EPA's ability to maintain or update clean air standards would have serious negative consequences for public health. As others will attest to today, these negative effects can and would include increased medical complications, increased hospitalizations, and even mortality. Simply put - the science says air pollution is bad for our health. Rolling back EPA's ability to protect the public from this threat literally has life and death stakes.

Similarly, deep and unwarranted cuts to EPA funding, as we saw in the failed H.R. 1, would cripple EPA's ability to conduct not only its Clean Air Act obligations, but many of its other core functions. This includes EPA efforts to ensure safe and clean drinking water, to clean up contaminated areas, and to protect consumers against toxic substances like lead, PCBs, and many others.

Forty years ago we made a commitment as a nation to clean air for all Americans, regardless of age, geography, race, or socioeconomic status. It would be unhealthy, in just about every sense of the word, to break that commitment today. We are therefore opposed to any efforts that would rollback decades worth of progress we've made towards protecting Americans from an unhealthy environment.