

MEMO

To: Interested Parties
From: Gene Karpinski & Tiernan Sittenfeld, League of Conservation Voters
Re: Combating Climate Change in the President's Second Term
Date: February 5, 2013

During his inaugural address, President Obama made clear that confronting the climate crisis is one of his administration's top priorities in his second term. With 2012 being the hottest year on record in the continental United States and climate change fueling deadly and costly floods, droughts, wildfires, and superstorm Sandy, it is clear that the time to act is now. While many in Washington have assumed that the House of Representatives, led by climate deniers, will prevent any progress on the issue or that congressional focus on issues like immigration, the budget and guns will preclude action on other major challenges, nothing could be further from the truth. President Obama can take historic steps to address the climate crisis, through his executive authority under the Clean Air Act. As a result, leading on climate change can be one of the President's biggest legacies – something that will resonate for generations to come.

The Authority to Take Executive Action on Climate Change

In 2007, in *Massachusetts v. EPA*, the Supreme Court ruled that global warming pollutants were covered by the Clean Air Act and directed the Environmental Protection Agency to determine whether the continued emission of such pollutants endangered the country's public health and welfare.

In December 2009, the EPA issued this "endangerment finding," concluding that, based on the best science, global warming pollution presents a clear threat to public health and welfare. The endangerment finding was the scientific determination necessary to allow the agency to limit global warming pollution under the Clean Air Act.

Combating Climate Change During the First Term

The Obama administration implemented a series of historic new rules that will increase national fuel economy standards to 54.5 miles per gallon by the year 2025 and reduce by roughly half the amount of global warming pollution coming from cars and trucks. This action represents the single biggest step the U.S. government has ever taken to reduce global warming pollution.

Last year, the EPA also proposed the first-ever limits on harmful industrial carbon pollution from new power plants. When finalized, these new clean air standards will reduce carbon pollution that contributes to global warming, while also improving public health, sparking innovation in clean technologies and creating clean energy jobs here in America. This landmark proposal garnered over 3 million supportive public comments shattering previous record comment levels and demonstrating the widespread public support for tackling climate change.

Leading on Climate Change During the Second Term

At roughly 40% of our nation's annual emissions, power plants are the United States' single largest source of carbon pollution. One of the most important actions President Obama can take to confront climate change is to use his executive authority under the Clean Air Act to implement limits on industrial carbon pollution from new and existing power plants. Cutting carbon pollution from America's aging power plant fleet at least 25 percent by 2020, coupled with boosting energy efficiency and shifting to clean energy sources, will achieve significant reductions in global warming pollution. The President should also reject the harmful Keystone XL tar sands pipeline - tar sands threaten the environment with far more global warming pollution than conventional crude oil.

Building on the President's Climate Legacy

In the last four years, President Obama has made significant progress in confronting climate change and building a clean energy economy. Using executive authority and without congressional action, the president should continue to build on that progress with game-changing action on climate change – building a historic legacy on one of the defining issues of our generation.