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California Officials Testify against U.S. EPA's Proposed Repeal of National Climate Policy

SAN FRANCISCO – Top California policymakers testified today in strong opposition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to repeal the Clean Power Plan, the centerpiece of federal efforts to fight climate change.

Speaking at a U.S. EPA listening session in San Francisco, representatives from seven state agencies involved in climate and clean energy policy told the hearing that repeal of the plan ignores science and will endanger public health, the environment and economic prosperity.

"Climate change is not a conceptual or theoretical challenge. The evidence is overwhelming – universities and scientists worldwide agree – that climate change is all too real," said Matthew Rodriguez, California Secretary for Environmental Protection. "There is no time for political posturing and partisan debate. We have to respond to this challenge now, while preparing for an uncertain future."

Adopted in 2015, the Clean Power Plan set the first-ever national limits on carbon pollution from power plants, the largest stationary source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shaped by years of public outreach and engagement, the plan builds on state progress in reducing carbon pollution. It would cut emissions from power plants by a third below 2005 levels by 2030.

Today's public listening session in San Francisco was one of three U.S. EPA is holding around the country after announcing its intention to repeal the plan in October.

"This is a listening session. So I ask, who will you listen to?" said Mary D. Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board. "Is it the voices of the polluting, outdated technologies of the past, or the ever growing number of people across this country who are demanding clean energy? We have already made our choice in California. Our future is in clean energy."

With one of the cleanest power grids in the country, California is on track to produce 33 percent of its power from renewable sources by 2020. And under SB 350, signed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in 2015, California will produce 50 percent of its energy from renewables by 2030 and double the rate of energy efficiency savings in California buildings.

Courtney Smith, Chief Deputy Director of the California Energy Commission, told the hearing that California has already exceeded the requirements of the Clean Power Plan.

"California's action demonstrates that complying with the Clean Power Plan is not only feasible, it strengthens the resiliency of our power sector and helps basic services remain affordable for all Californians," she said.

California Public Utilities Commissioner Carla J. Peterman testified that the state is reducing carbon emissions while monthly electricity bills remain significantly less than the national average.

"In the last two decades, we have invested billions of dollars in energy efficiency, renewable energy, demand response, energy storage, and more efficient natural gas plants," she said. "Investing in greenhouse gas reductions benefits ratepayers and can be done in a manner that ensures reliability and affordability."

Several state officials noted that the state is already seeing the devastating effects of a changing climate.

"There is no question that climate change is here," said Tom Gibson, California Undersecretary for Natural Resources. "Rising average temperatures, shrinking mountain snowpack, severe drought, dead and dying trees, wildfires, floods and coastal storm surges are making their mark on our state."

"The Clean Power Plan represents an important step on the path toward cleaner energy sources that can help avoid the worst effects of climate change," Gibson said. "Retaining and implementing this important plan is in the best interest of our environment, our communities, our economy, and our shared future."

Arsenio Mataka, Special Assistant to the California Attorney General for the Environment, said that U.S. EPA has a legal obligation to reduce carbon pollution and fight climate change.

"We must plot a path to a decarbonized future that minimizes the toll that climate change will exact on our health, our environment and our economy. In California, we are doing just that," he said.

"Attorney General Becerra's message for the EPA and Administrator Pruitt is simple: fulfill your duty to regulate carbon pollution from the largest stationary sources in the United States by defending the Clean Power Plan, rather than tearing it up. If you ignore your responsibilities and continue down the path you are on, the Attorney General will be there to fight you every inch of the way."

In October, Gov. Brown [reaffirmed California's commitment](#) to exceed the targets of the Clean Power Plan and warned of the costs of repealing it. U.S. EPA's proposal is also [opposed by the U.S. Climate Alliance](#), a bipartisan coalition of governors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Complete transcripts of today's testimony are available [here](#).

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