



## Feinstein Urges EPA to Adopt Tougher Air Quality Standards for Annual Exposure Levels for Particulate Matter

*- Links to health problems, risk to California's air quality standards, and harm to poor and minority communities especially troubling -*

February 1, 2006

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) is urging the Environmental Protection Agency to enact tougher regulations on maximum annual exposure levels for particulate matter. In a letter to EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, Senator Feinstein expressed urgency for enacting stricter National Ambient Air Quality standards in order to protect public health. She pointed out that many studies have shown a link between inhalation of fine particles and heart disease, respiratory ailments, and other health problems.

In her letter to Administrator Johnson, Senator Feinstein wrote, **“According to the journal *Science*, Agency models for nine major U.S. cities predict that the most stringent daily and annual standards recommended by the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee would lower death rates due to fine particulate matter in those cities by 48%. In contrast, the Agency’s proposed lowering of just the daily standard caused death rates to drop only by 22%.”**

Senator Feinstein also warned that the relaxed standards proposed by EPA in rural areas will adversely affect air quality in many parts of California. California has its own particulate matter standards, and EPA’s proposed regulations could make enforcement of these state air quality laws more difficult. Senator Feinstein expressed concern that EPA’s proposed changes would be most harmful to poor and minority communities, which are disproportionately affected by and face more health risks from air pollution.

**“We must remain aware of the levels of potentially harmful material in the air everywhere,”** Senator Feinstein wrote. **“I urge you to adopt standards that will protect air, and lives, to the fullest extent possible.”**

The following is the text of the letter sent by Senator Feinstein to Administrator Johnson:

January 30, 2006

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson  
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

I am writing to express concern with the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed new National Ambient Air Quality standards for particulate matter, as published in the *Federal Register* on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006. While I applaud the proposal's tougher regulations on maximum daily acceptable exposure to fine particulate matter, I am troubled that the annual exposure level was not reduced. Further, the proposed relaxation of standards in rural areas will adversely affect air quality in significant areas of California.

As you know, many studies have shown a link between inhalation of fine particles and heart disease, respiratory ailments, and other health problems. The Agency's own Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) recommended lowering the annual fine particulate matter standard. According to the journal *Science*, Agency models for nine major U.S. cities predict that the most stringent daily and annual standards recommended by CASAC would lower death rates due to fine particulate matter in those cities by 48%. In contrast, the Agency's proposed lowering of just the daily standard caused death rates to drop only by 22%.

There is still disagreement among scientists as to whether coarser particulate matter from windblown dust and soil is harmful to human health. Until consensus is reached, it makes sense that levels of airborne particulate matter that are considered dangerous in cities should also be considered dangerous in rural areas. The proposed lack of monitoring for rural areas is especially troubling. We must remain aware of the levels of potentially harmful material in the air everywhere.

I am sure that you are also aware that California has its own particulate matter standards. I am concerned that the Agency's proposed regulations will make enforcement of these state air quality laws more difficult, leading to a reduction in air quality.

Finally, because air pollution disproportionately affects poor and minority communities, these proposed changes would have the greatest effect on them. For example, in California, Latinos are more than twice as likely as whites to live in neighborhoods where air pollution poses the greatest danger to human health.

According to an Environmental Working Group report, particulate air pollution in predominantly Latino neighborhoods in California is 36% higher than in predominantly white neighborhoods. Both urban and rural Latino communities will be at risk; the border region around Calexico was cited by State air board officials as an area of particular concern under the proposal.

I urge you to carefully consider all of CASAC's recommendations for air quality standards for particulate matter, and to adopt standards that will protect air, and lives, to the fullest extent possible.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

###