



BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

EPA Listening session on Carbon Pollution Standards for Existing Power Plants

Remarks by Anthony Vance

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Good afternoon. I'm Anthony Vance, Director of the U.S. Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

I am pleased to join the more than two dozen representatives of faith communities, and many others that have come here over these two days to speak in strong support of EPA's efforts to set carbon pollution standards for existing power plants.

The proposed standards, when implemented, promise to cut heat-trapping carbon emissions from U.S. power plants by 30% by 2030. They are an essential step toward reducing pollution from our largest source of emissions. The standards will help to stimulate improved energy efficiency and growth in renewable energy and lead us toward a clean energy future.

As you know too well, carbon pollution triggers asthma attacks and respiratory disease, worsens air quality, and contributes to more frequent, destructive, costly and deadly extreme weather events. And yet, to date, carbon emissions have not been regulated! It's time for that to change.

As a parent, I have personal reasons to support these standards. Several years ago, my own daughter at the age of eight, had her first asthma attack. It was frightening to see her struggling, unable to breathe. Fortunately, we were able to rush her to a nearby hospital where she was treated and released, but as any parent can tell you, that kind of experience makes a lasting impression. No one's child should have to needlessly suffer as a result of our unrestrained carbon pollution.

While the technical aspects of reducing our emissions are manifold, there is a deep moral dimension to the issue that is understood and felt by individuals and institutions across the faith spectrum. Can we really continue to emit unlimited amounts of carbon into the atmosphere knowing the harmful impact it will have on current and future generations, as well as all life on the planet? This question becomes even more poignant, when we realize that those being impacted first and most severely have had little or nothing to do with creating the problem.

We in the Bahá'í community are guided by a firm belief in the principle of the oneness of humankind. This spiritual principle has profound implications for policy at many levels. It guides us to seek solutions that are equitable and just, treating all people as members of one human family. I believe that the EPA's proposed carbon standards, if implemented, would be one way of honoring and reflecting an awareness of this central principle.

The American Bahá'í community for the last several years has taken action to reduce its carbon emissions, both nationally and locally. We removed an old heating and air conditioning system and replaced it with a high efficiency system in our continental House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, where we are also building a LEED-certified visitors center. Bahá'ís in 114 local communities in 43 states were among the 1700 diverse faith congregations that took part in Interfaith Power and Light's national Preach-in on climate change last February.

These efforts and others like them help to raise awareness of the climate issue and emphasize the important part each of us can play in seeking solutions. But such actions alone will not be enough. We need strong national policies that will propel us toward a clean energy future. EPA's proposed carbon standards will help in this regard.

As evidenced in the recent U.S. National Climate Assessment, the impacts of carbon pollution are already being felt across all regions and sectors of the U.S. economy, and the projected impacts from doing nothing about our emissions are severe indeed. In truth, these carbon standards are long overdue and, particularly, in the absence of a more comprehensive national climate policy, they are an essential step in the right direction.

The approaching Climate Summit scheduled at the United Nations in September is seeking commitments by all nations to reduce their emissions. The climate challenge can only be solved through international cooperation and national leadership. The United States has an important role to play in inspiring the world to take cooperative action. The Administration's proposed carbon standards demonstrate a seriousness of intent in this direction.

With many symptoms of a changing climate at our door and the many health impacts of carbon pollution quite evident, we must act with great conviction and haste to reduce our emissions. I thank EPA for its efforts to do just that through its proposed carbon pollution standards.