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North America's Building Trades Unions Express Deep Concerns Over New EPA Carbon Regulations

WASHINGTON, DC -- *The following statement was issued today by Sean McGarvey, President of North America's Building Trades Unions, in reaction to the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to curb carbon dioxide from existing power plants:*

"North America's Building Trades Unions express deep concerns that in releasing new, aggressive regulations affecting carbon-producing power plants across our nation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has lost sight of the potential economic chaos that will ensue if these ambitious regulations fail to provide realistic and achievable standards.

"Significant numbers of states, and countless communities across America, are currently heavily reliant upon coal-burning power plants. Our unions are concerned that these rules, insomuch as they are proposed on an accelerated and unrealistic timetable for implementation, will cost us in higher electricity rates, in lost jobs, and in lost business growth due to a lack of affordable, reliable electricity.

"What these rules fail to acknowledge is that until large-scale renewable energy sources and their storage capabilities become commercially viable, the notion that we can meet our baseload energy needs through renewables is nothing short of fantasy.

"Equally frustrating is that we must bear witness to EPA, in effect, crafting national energy policy via regulatory fiat because our elected officials lack the political courage to develop a comprehensive energy policy. As a result, our nation is being forced, by a small band of federal bureaucrats beholden to radical environmentalists, to pick 'winners' and 'losers,' with the losers falling disproportionately among a middle class that is sure to see higher energy costs and fewer opportunities for well-paying jobs.

"The EPA and the Administration have been quick to cite their assessments of the improved health, in terms of lower rates of asthma, etc., that would purportedly occur in certain communities under these new regulations.

"But, to our unions, that begs the question: When and where will EPA or the Administration produce an economic assessment that measures the impact these regulations will have on job losses, family finances and economic growth in communities all across the country? Like health issues, are these not equally important priorities of the American people as well?

"By taking away an energy source such as coal in such an immediate fashion, while not proposing any semblance of a strategy to accelerate the production of nuclear energy - the only true and proven low-cost, baseload source of energy with zero emissions - EPA's regulations will inevitably result in higher electricity costs for consumers and businesses.

"The United States is correct to pursue an 'all of the above' energy strategy today, while encouraging and implementing measures that will lead to the increased efficiencies and energy storage capabilities of renewable energy which will lead to those sources assuming a greater concentration of our nationwide power production.

"As a nation, we cannot be governed by unrealistic wishes that believe our nation can simply 'flip a switch' and magically turn to renewables on a moment's notice. Yet that, for the most part, is what EPA is saying we are going to do.

"In seeking to reduce carbon emissions, we must consider any negative consequences to baseload generation, jobs and economic growth. The watchword here should be prudence. Prudence in the design and implementation of a serious national energy policy; and prudence on the part of environmentalists, whose goals and objectives would be better served by focusing their attention on those parts of the world where carbon-based pollution is rapidly on the rise; which is certainly not the United States, where carbon levels have leveled off.

"On an issue that has such far-reaching economic implications, policy makers ought not be spooked into taking radical action that would have severe effects on the American economy, American workers and the American middle class.

"North America's Building Trades Unions intend to remain engaged in this process by working in close collaboration with our affiliates who are directly and significantly impacted by this proposal."

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North America's Building Trades Unions are an alliance of 14 national and international unions that collectively represent over 3 million skilled craft professionals in the United States and Canada

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