

WASHINGTON, D.C. --- Today, the Bush Administration announced its plan to weaken the clean air protection known as New Source Review. This decision will undermine the Clean Air Act by creating new loopholes to allow factories, including power plants and oil refineries, to spew more asthma-causing pollution from their smokestacks.

Representatives Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Henry Waxman (D-CA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), and Hilda Solis (D-CA), held a press conference today at the U.S. Capitol to respond to the EPA Administrator Whitman's announcement today to gut the protections of public health and the environment in favor of big polluters.

According to the EPA, the plants that have already been accused of breaking the law are responsible for shortening as many as 9,000 American lives this year. Up to 7,000 of these deaths could be avoided just by complying with the existing law. Just the power plants in the Washington, DC metropolitan areas alone are responsible for over 250 deaths per year, from soot pollution, almost 20,000 asthma attacks, and 3,700 emergency room visits. Additionally, the EPA is going through with this rule change despite 130,000 public comments calling on the EPA to strengthen, not weaken, the NSR policy.

Representative Earl Blumenauer issued the following statement on the new rules:

"We are experiencing today yet another brazen attack on the environment and public health by the Bush Administration. The New Source Review program requires the oldest and dirtiest industrial facilities to add modern pollution controls whenever they make major modifications that significantly increase pollutions.

"Not only will today's new rule allow power producers to modify their plants in ways that increase pollution without installing up to date pollution controls, but the White House's efforts today will undermine attempts to enforce the law at facilities that have already been charged with illegal polluting.

"I find it hard to believe that the Administration can ignore all of the new studies coming out linking asthma, heart disease, lung problems, and premature death to air pollution. The Administration has once again sacrificed public health for the direct benefit of their friends in the energy industry."