

For CASAC Meeting, December 12-13, 2018.

EPA Acting Administrator Wheeler,
Chairman and Members of the CASAC Panel On Particulate Air Pollution:

(I am a former UCLA Professor of Clinical Pulmonary Medicine, and am partly retired after 3 decades in private practice as a Consultant in Lung Diseases. My medical education as a specialist was largely supported by public funds through the National Institutes of Health.)

The only residents of the United States who should not care about your decisions regarding particulate air pollution are the ones who do not breathe.

All of the other people breathe in nearly 3000 gallons of air each day, with or without measureable particles in each gallon. Whether we trap those particles in our nose or throat, or whether they penetrate deep into the lung affects every one of us. That outcome depends largely on the size of the particles. Larger particles (greater than 2.5 microns median mass aerodynamic diameter) tend to deposit in the upper airway, where the moving mucus blanket effectively clears them from the body. Ultrafine particles (less than 0.5 microns mmd) are inhaled into the deepest parts of the lungs (alveoli) and may waft out again in the exhaled air. Particles in between those sizes tend to deposit on the wet surfaces of the airways and alveoli.

Especially when the particles carry on their surface harmful pollutant gases such as sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides (found in smog), they contribute to lung diseases such as asthma and emphysema. The economic and personal costs of these health problems are among the highest of any known diseases. Making them less common or more common matters a lot both to the individuals who miss school and work, and to the public cost of health care.

Our nation has invested public tax money in the careers of thousands of highly motivated and highly capable young people, allowing them to develop expertise in various aspects of science, medicine, and engineering. To ignore the willing help of such experts in developing public health policy regarding air pollution is equivalent to taking the Treasury Bonds your grand-daddy left you and putting a match to them! Who among the CASAC Panel has a right to claim knowledge of all the fields needed to understand the impact of changes in our public policy regarding air pollution?

Decisions you make regarding air quality will affect your children, their children and my children. Decisions made in ignorance will not protect any of them from adverse health and financial consequences of bad choices. I urge you to retain the Particulate Matter (scientific) Review Panel to help you reach wise decisions.

H. Kenneth Fisher MD
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