For five decades, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made and enforced protections that reined in polluters and saved lives. Now, the agency is working on public health standards that will clean up our air and water, and save even more lives: carbon pollution protections for new and existing plants, dirty smog that pollutes our air, and dangerous coal ash.

However, the new Congressional Leadership has declared that they will force legislation to block, weaken or delay these critical air and water pollution standards. Although the public voted for change last November, the American people did not vote to unravel the five decades of progress we’ve made tackling pollution and making our nation a cleaner, safer and healthier place to raise children.

Our Members of Congress must stand up to this polluter payoff agenda and vote against any attempts to weaken clean air, clean water and public health protections.

Polluter-backed leaders in Congress have threatened to roll back progress on critical public health protections on issues like:

**CARBON**

Carbon pollution is the main contributor to climate disruption, making extreme weather worse—including more severe floods, widespread wildfires and record drought. It is also linked to life-threatening air pollution—such as the smog that can trigger asthma attacks.

The EPA’s first-ever proposed carbon pollution protections would limit the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can dump into our air. These safeguards would require energy companies to reduce their carbon pollution using technological innovation or to transition to cleaner sources of energy. Coal and gas-fired power plants emit more than 2.3 billion metric tons per year of carbon pollution, approximately 40% of total U.S. energy-related carbon pollution. By establishing strong carbon pollution protections under the proposed Clean Power Plan, the EPA can clean up and modernize the way we power our country.
SMOG
Smog (also called ground-level ozone) is a widespread air pollutant that is known to cause respiratory problems, including asthma attacks. A strong, science-based smog standard would protect public health and help millions of Americans breathe easier. Smog may even affect the nervous and cardiovascular systems and can lead to premature death. Updating smog standards in the past has helped America reduce smog levels by approximately 25 percent since 1980, according to the EPA. It’s past time for another update, such as the proposal made by the EPA in December, to make sure the standards reflect the latest scientific research and continue to protect public health.

COAL ASH
Every year, the nation’s coal plants produce 140 million tons of coal ash pollution, the toxic by-product that is left over after the coal is burned, and dumped in the backyards of power plants across the nation into open pits. Coal ash pollution contains high levels of toxic heavy metals, such as arsenic, lead, selenium, and other cancer causing agents. The public health hazards and environmental threats to nearby communities from unsafe coal ash dumping have been known for many years and include increased risk of cancer, learning disabilities, neurological disorders, birth defects, reproductive failure, asthma, and other illnesses. Living near a wet coal ash storage pond is significantly more dangerous than smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, according to a risk assessment done by the EPA. In fact, people living within 1 mile of unlined coal ash ponds can have a 1 in 50 risk of cancer—more than 2,000 times higher than what the EPA considers acceptable.

While they do not go far enough, this past December, the EPA proposed the first-ever protections for the disposal of coal ash. We need to make sure these standards are implemented.

CONGRESS SHOULD PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH, NOT BIG POLLUTERS
Congress members should represent the interests of their constituents, not Big Coal and Oil industries, by voting against attacks on public health protections. We need the government to do what we cannot do individually—protect us from pollution and polluters who are only motivated by higher profits and their bottom line.

Stronger protections to curb life-threatening pollution can help us improve the lives of millions of Americans and clean up our air, water, and environment. We can make the world safer and healthier for our children and families.