



Tishman Environment
and Design Center



TISHMAN CENTER · JANUARY 17, 2018

New Yorkers Assemble at The New School for The People's Hearing on the Repeal of the Clean Power Plan

By Amanda Sachs

On October 16th, 2017, EPA
administrator Scott Pruitt declared

the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to [repeal the nation-wide Clean Power Plan](#). This was a predictable yet concerning attack on environmental regulations from a man who sued the EPA thirteen times before being appointed to its top leadership position. Proponents of the Clean Power Plan were disturbed by the EPA's plan to hold its only hearing in Charleston, West Virginia, a state notoriously referred to as "coal country." To ensure New Yorkers had a platform for their voices to be heard, New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman teamed up with the New York City Mayor's Office and The New School to host [The People's Hearing on the Repeal of the Clean Power Plan](#). On January 9th, 2018, locals took time out of their day to publically respond to the EPA's decision in the New School Auditorium. With assistance from 29 co-sponsors and input from hundreds of people from diverse walks of life, The People's Hearing reflected the scientifically-backed convictions of New Yorkers. Whether they wholeheartedly supported the plan or sought to identify deficits within the plan, each person who spoke did so with a sobering cognizance of the damaging impacts of carbon emissions. The People's Hearing featured New School faculty members Michelle DePass, Joel

Towers, Ana Baptista, and alumnus Kartik Amarnath. First to testify was Michelle DePass, Dean of the [Milano School](#) & Tishman Professor of Environmental Policy and Management. DePass, a former Assistant Administrator at the EPA, called the EPA's actions "strategic negligence" and urged the agency to "fulfill its mission to protect human health and the environment by enforcing the Clean Power Plan and going a step further to develop strategies to ensure justice and equity in its implementation." Joel Towers, Executive Dean of [Parsons School of Design](#), spoke directly to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, warning, "Abandoning the Clean Power Plan will delay the decarbonization of the US energy sector at a time when the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly clear that carbon-based fuel sources must be retired and replaced by renewable energy as quickly and responsibly as possible. Simply put, we are in a race to adapt to and mitigate climate change." Concerned community members spoke of the environmental consequences of deregulating carbon emissions, including sea level rise; increased frequency; and intensity of disasters, acid rain, ocean acidification, and smog. Of course, these consequences impact human well-being as well as ecosystem health. On January 8th, The National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) announced that 2017 was the costliest year for natural disasters. Sixteen disaster events had losses exceeding \$1 billion each across the United States, including California's firestorms, and Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Ana Baptista, Chair and Assistant Professor in the Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management Program, spoke of the repercussions repealing the CPP would have on environmental justice communities. She stated, "Communities of color and low-income communities, indigenous communities, poor and marginalized people across the world are on the frontlines of this ever-expanding climate disaster. The Clean Power Plan rule was not a perfect rule but it was not insignificant." Healthcare professionals and specialists discussed heat-related deaths, asthma rates, health inequality, and healthcare costs associated with repealing the CPP. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that air pollution is now the world's largest single environmental health risk. One hard-hitting piece of information found by the EPA's regulatory impact analysis was quoted by several speakers; it stated, "If the Clean Power Plan is enforced, by 2030 it will prevent 300,000

missed days of work and school, 1,700 non-fatal heart attacks, 90,000 asthma attacks in children, and 3,600 premature deaths.”Economic health was a frequently visited topic, as well. In the United States, the renewable energy sector currently dominates job growth within the overall energy sector. Repealing the CPP could increase utility costs and threaten renewable job growth. A representative from Energy Efficiency for All stated, “Low-income households suffer double energy burdens than median income families and energy costs are increasing greater than housing. The repeal of the CPP means higher utility costs. Retrofitting in the state of New York retrofitting could create thousands of jobs alone and the energy efficiency sector creates millions of jobs.”Many New Yorkers voiced their concerns that the plan did not go far enough to decrease the nation’s dependence on natural gas as a transitionary energy source. Representatives from frontline communities voiced their concerns with the CPP’s lack of restrictions on [methane emissions, which have a global warming potential 28-36 times greater than that of carbon dioxide](#).The consensus of the “People’s Hearing” was that the Clean Power Plan is not a perfect plan but without it there would be no

nation-wide policy to limit carbon dioxide emissions. On Monday, January 15th the “NPRM Comment Period” ended and the EPA’s repeal entered its “final rule” stage. As of Monday, January 15th 203,115 comments were received by the EPA.

Amanda Sachs is a graduate student in the Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management Program at The Milano School. She spends her time pondering pathways for equitable and high-impact climate change mitigation/adaptation strategies. She works as an environmental justice research assistant at The New School.



Comments (0)

Newest First

Preview

POST COMMENT...