

Clean Power, Clean Air, Cleaner communities

My daughter and I love to cook together, and one of our favorite shows is “Chopped”, where chefs come from across the country and are forced in 20 -30 minute increments to create an appetizer, an entrée and a dessert with a mystery basket of ingredients. This show is intriguing in that all the chefs are working with the same ingredients, but ultimately, the way they decide to transform the basket of ingredients is unique. While the Food Network was not the first thing on the minds of the rule writers, I believe the EPA is providing yet another opportunity for us to create a meal that will not only be filling, but enhance the quality of life for all.

At the end of the month, environmental advocates across the country will be testifying at public hearings across the country to make their voices heard about the EPA's Clean Power Plan (<http://www2.epa.gov/carbon-pollution-standards/clean-power-plan-proposed-rule>), which sets state limits on the amount of carbon dioxide that can be produced from one of the largest sources of carbon pollution, power plants (or referred to in the plan as electricity generating units). This plan is the next big step in President Obama's Climate Action Plan (<http://www2.epa.gov/carbon-pollution-standards/clean-power-plan-proposed-rule>) introduced last year, to set forth an agenda to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, build community resilience and encourage energy efficiency. Yes, this is a huge step forward in the climate battle and there is a need for ALL voices to be heard, especially those of us that are disproportionately impacted by power plant emissions and numerous co-pollutants from exhaust stacks in our community. There is a need for us to not only be present at the public hearings across the country, but start to engage with utilities, environmental agencies, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders – at the local and state level – to ensure that equity is a major part of the state-implementation planning process.

This rule, I believe, will be a game changer. This is a federal rule but similar to other federal regulations that are crafted in the Beltway, the State environmental agencies have the responsibility of creating a unique ‘menu of options’ to meet state-based carbon dioxide emission goals. This ‘menu’ can include things like improving emission rates through technological upgrades from power plants, converting current coal-fired utilities to natural gas, enhancing state energy-level renewable energy requirements, and many other options. So while having options on any menu where one dines is a good thing, it is also crucial that environmental justice and social justice advocates across the country help create the ‘best menu’ possible – at the state level – that will ensure that EVERYONE leaves the meal full and satisfied.

To understand how you can chime-in, WE ACT for Environmental Justice (www.weact.org) is hosting a webinar next Monday, July 21st to unpack the Clean Power Plan and highlight some of the key equity concerns that could arise (<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4911732106220637953>). We know that there are many local environmental challenges that require time, energy and resources that, quite frankly, do not leave much space to work on federal policy. However, it is my hope that environmental advocates across the country will listen in, and see how much we really have at stake if we do NOT get engaged. The EPA's Clean Power Plan will have a local/state impact that - in one way or another – will probably touch on issues of energy, air quality, alternative fuels, civil rights, green jobs, and education that align with the work you are already engaged in.

Let us all be at the table and make sure we make the menu work for all of us. There's a lot at stake.

What's at stake: Environmental Justice and the EPA's Clean Power Plan on Jul 21, 2014 2:30 PM EDT at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4911732106220637953>