



Good afternoon. I'm Rabbi George Stern. Raised in Philadelphia, I returned in 2001 to lead the Neighborhood Interfaith Movement. I thank you for this opportunity to address the Commonwealth's proposed inclusion in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, bipartisan support for which has led every other Northeast state to sign on.

I have the good fortune of living in a less-polluted, wooded area of the city. As part of my work in support of early childhood education, however, I have traveled extensively through neighborhoods like Point Breeze, where oil refineries have spewed toxins into the air for decades, sickening many adults and children. I've worked with families living near power plants and in neighborhoods with high levels of asthma, which damages the physical and mental health of children and slows their academic achievement.

All reputable scientists point to greenhouse gas emissions as major contributors both to ill health and to global warming and climate change, affecting every citizen here, across the Commonwealth, and throughout the world. I am thrilled, therefore, that Governor Wolf seeks to have Pennsylvania join RGGI.

I'm especially enthusiastic about RGGI because of its many win-win consequences. It encourages a gradual shift to green energy, creating new investment and jobs while bringing new sources of revenue that the state can invest to speed shifts towards a greener, healthier future.

Pennsylvania lags behind most states in job creation and in recovering from the pandemic recession. RGGI states have outpaced others in economic growth by almost a third. One estimate suggests that RGGI could create 27,000 jobs in Pennsylvania, potentially lifting more families out of poverty.

And of course, carbon emission reduction improves the health of children and adults—and the planet.

In other words, RGGI is a comprehensive, holistic approach that responds to multiple challenges simultaneously.

RGGI's regional scale ensures successful outcomes. It has a proven track record of reducing carbon emissions, thereby slowing climate change's threats to the well-being of Pennsylvanians and people everywhere. Last week's tornado in Montgomery County is a local example of the effects of climate change. More frightening are the ever deadlier and costly hurricanes, the devastating forest fires across the country, and the rising ocean levels that already threaten cities like New York and Miami—and that will eventually flood parts of Philadelphia along the tidal Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers.

It is in Pennsylvania's self-interest to join RGGI and reduce carbon emissions. Indeed, since Pennsylvania is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the US, joining RGGI would align us with states that have accepted the moral imperative to slow climate change and ensure a better future for generations to come.

I look forward to Pennsylvania becoming an enthusiastic member of RGGI.