



“Testimony for CO2 Budget Trading Program Regulation” (i.e. - in Support of joining the RGGI)

Submitted by: David DeMaria

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This is David DeMaria from Warrington, PA. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide comment on the proposal for Pennsylvania to finally join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Just a quick note on my own background; I’m a Chemical Engineer with 40 years of experience working in the industrial gas, chemical and environmental and energy sectors, often in support of fossil fuel industries, and I’m also an environmental activist, the blend of which I believe gives me a great of perspective on issues like this. I would argue that our participation in the RGGI is already long overdue. RGGI has a 10-year history of delivering health and climate benefits to participating states throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic and it is well documented that residents in these states experience significantly fewer premature deaths, heart attacks, and respiratory illnesses. This last point is particularly important to Pennsylvanians because of our distinction of having the 5<sup>th</sup> dirtiest power sector in the country. It’s also so important to note that the health effects of dangerous air pollution, like soot and smog, fall most heavily on communities of color. A new study published in the journal *Environmental Health* estimates that 40% of air pollution-related coronary heart disease deaths in Allegheny County occur in environmental justice communities, even though these communities represent just 27% of the county’s total population.

In addition to the undeniable health benefits, the flexible cap and trade features of the RGGI have proven to be an economic boon to its members, returning well over \$2 billion in proceeds. Maryland, for example, has used its more than \$500 million in proceeds to strategically invest in energy efficiency upgrades for low- to moderate-income households and improving energy efficiency for small businesses, as a way to drive energy costs even lower. As Pennsylvania recovers from the economic downturn brought on by COVID-19, there will undoubtedly be needs that these proceeds can address via strategic investment in pollution-reducing activities.

The modeling the DEP has already done estimates that from 2022 to 2030, participating in RGGI would lead to an increase in our gross state product of nearly \$2 billion and a net increase of over 27,000 jobs in our Commonwealth! These are primarily jobs in the clean energy sector, one of the fastest growing in the country, and position us to be true a leader in this field, and as a net gain, they take into effect any job losses in other segments such as the coal industry. However, the coal industry has already been in steady decline for decades due to market forces such as cheaper natural gas. The results also show that overall the citizens of our Commonwealth could see a cumulative increase of \$3.7 billion in disposable income by 2050 as energy costs decrease over time. These estimates are at the low end because they do not include investments of RGGI revenues in things like energy efficiency improvements for businesses and homeowners.

So health-wise and economic-wise, participation in the RGGI already makes tremendous sense. But what makes it then a true no-brainer is the climate impacts that this will help lessen. Pennsylvania is the third highest state in terms of emitting greenhouse gases, and the power sector alone makes up roughly a third of that total. Climate change remains the existential threat to our state, our country and our planet and the time to take substantial action is also long overdue. My friends, my family, my neighbors are all worried about this and as the polls show, the number of people who doubt the crystal clear science is a continuously shrinking minority, and they want their leaders to act. Beyond the record high temperatures and ice melt throughout the arctic and Antarctic regions, we are experiencing extreme and volatile weather all across the country – fires out west, severe hurricanes down south, record flood waters throughout the middle of the country, and increased flooding throughout the commonwealth, even tornados hitting my hometown here in Bucks County twice this year, something that never happens; no serious person can deny what is occurring and the scientific explanation. We can't wait any longer to take clear action to lessen the impact on the planet from the amount of carbon we are putting into the atmosphere. Fortunately, very fortunately, it is no longer a choice between what is good for the planet, the environment and the health of our people, and having a strong and robust economy. A program like RGGI accomplishes all of these objectives.