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State Representative, 44th District
Kentucky House of Representatives
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Joni Jenkins and I represent Kentucky House District 44 in the Kentucky General Assembly. The 44th district is South of the Louisville, right on the banks of the Ohio River.

It is home to hard working, mostly blue collar, workers who strive everyday to raise their children for a brighter future.

The 44th District is also home to 2 coal fired power plants with 2 coal ash landfills and coal ash ponds.

Daily, fly ash blows from the towering landfill and lands on my constituents’ cars and their homes. Fly ash lands on their children’s toys and swing sets. Fly ash lands on their vegetable gardens.

And, that’s just the pollutants we can see.

I traveled today to represent the people of the 44th District; the Moms and Dads, the Grandmas and the Grandpas; who want to see their children grow up healthy and prosperous.

As a public official, I rely on having the most truthful, objective set of facts before me as I make decisions that may affect thousands of people for thousands of years. It is a responsibility that I sought and one that I do not take lightly.

I believe the proposed EPA climate rules are a step in the right direction, for so many reasons – the health of our citizens, the health of our economy and the health of our planet.

Kentucky has an abysmal rate of asthma – 13%. Asthma and allergies have triggers in common, among them being pollen counts, which are expected to rise significantly if climate change continues unabated. We will not see positive change until we begin to limit the amount of carbon dioxide spewing forth from the coal fired power plants. I have asthma – I know that I will always be on medication and will never be far from a rescue inhaler. My condition is manageable, but there are
side effects, like bone loss, from the very medicine that allows me to breathe. We are sentencing too large a number of our children to this chronic disease.

As a state, we are attempting to prepare our young students for a new and global economy. Clean energy initiatives have proven to be economically successful in many jurisdictions throughout the world. Kentucky needs to join in this revolution. Since 1970, every dollar invested in compliance with Clean Air Act standards has yielded 4 to 8 dollars in economic benefits.

Between 2008 and 2009, the Louisville area was hit by hurricane strength winds in the Fall, a January ice storm that left much of Louisville and the western portion of KY without power for months and a summer flash flood caused by 6½ inches of rain falling during morning rush hour resulting in millions of dollars of damage. The climate is changing and not just in Louisville, KY.

The EPA is to be commended for stepping up in the absence of congressional action, to address GHG emissions from power plants. The flexible approach proposed in the rules for existing and modified electric generating units allows states like Kentucky to improve the efficiency in how we generate and consume electricity – looking for ways on both sides of the meter to improve the quality of life of the people of the 4th poorest state in the nation.

We have “cooked the books” on energy for many years in Kentucky, and our reliance on coal-fired power and electricity made “cheap” by externalizing the pollution costs has had a real impact on the people of my district and others that host coal-fired power plants. Requiring that the full environmental and human health impact of combusting fossil fuels be accounted for is not a “war on coal,” but is instead a rational effort to protect human health and our children’s future by stopping the use of the public’s air, land, and water for industrial waste disposal.

As a person of faith, I would like to join my denomination, the United Church of Christ in commending the EPA for taking a crucial step toward safeguarding human communities and the earth for generations to come.

Thank you