STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH POYTHRESS, President, League of Women Voters of Georgia TO the EPA LISTENING SESSION, July 29, 2014, Atlanta, Georgia

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan. Also, thank you for conducting these regional hearings to allow for public comments on a broad scale.

The air we breathe is critical to the health of all Americans, and particularly critical for the young, old, and impaired. We as Americans are obligated to preserve our natural resources – including clean, breathable air!

It is the position of the League of Women Voters of Georgia and the other 49 Leagues in all 50 states, that we, as responsible Americans, owe a profound moral obligation to our children and to future generations to act now to protect them from the effects of climate change, which we know is caused in part by carbon pollution from power plants. We do have a moral obligation to protect our children and future generations. I am here today to thank the EPA for providing our population with protection by adopting standards for the 40% of carbon pollution from existing and new power plants in the United States. These emissions cause climate change and thousands of deaths every year.

In Georgia, we are have been taking the necessary steps to cut carbon pollution. Between 2008 and 2011 carbon emissions in Georgia dropped 20 percent and through the EPA’s Clean Power Plan, Georgia will have the flexibility to continue this positive momentum.

The standards proposed by the EPA are aggressive and ambitious. We urge the EPA to do even more to strengthen the proposal to recognize the tremendous potential for renewable energy and energy conservation. Cutting carbon emissions will protect public health by extending limits like the ones placed on arsenic, lead, mercury and soot. Reducing emissions from existing power plants is critical to addressing the growing danger that climate change poses to the health and welfare of U.S. citizens and people around the world, as acknowledged by both leading climate scientists and the EPA.
The American Lung Association, in its State of the Air Report, states that millions of Americans across our country, including children and the elderly, live in areas that received an “F” rating for at least one air quality measure. In Georgia, the four major metropolitan counties, Fulton, Cobb, DeKalb and Gwinnett, have over 800,000 children that are in these “F” rated areas. This is unacceptable and must be changed.

Leading public health organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Lung Association, the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Public Health Association have gone on record calling “climate change a serious public health issue.” In Georgia alone 8.2 percent of adults suffer from asthma, and across the country asthma rates have doubled. Until the US can get a handle on the dirty air, exacerbated by the climate change caused by carbon pollution, we will continue to see thousands of premature deaths, respiratory disease and a higher risk of asthma attacks.

On behalf of the children, and unborn generations of children, the League of Women Voters of Georgia urges the EPA to adopt strong carbon pollution standards for existing and new power plants and, to address one of the main causes of climate change. The implementation of strong carbon pollution standard will protect the health of all Americans from its devastating impact.

Thank you, again, for providing the opportunity for this public hearing to allow the public to express their comments on this vital public health issue that will impact the citizens of Georgia and the United States.

###

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GEORGIA

Elizabeth Poythress  | President  
evpoythress@lwvg.org  | www.lwvg.org  
office 404.522.4598  | cell 404.276.0454

100 Edgewood Ave, NE, Suite 3105, Atlanta, GA 30303