I am David Root. I speak today in favor of the proposed Clean Power Plan. I speak as a citizen increasingly concerned about the quality of life in my home state and on our planet. I am a lawyer by profession, an elder in the Presbyterian church, a husband, father and relatively new grandfather. I do not speak for nor am I sponsored by any vested or special interest.

I was surprised to learn several years ago that our nation’s power plants cause nearly 40% of carbon pollution in the United States. Georgia is a big contributor to this carbon problem because we use coal to produce electricity. Several years ago I had a legal matter arising at Plant Scherer near Macon, Georgia, and I got to take a look at that facility. I was amazed to see train car after train car of coal rolling into the plant, coal that had been extracted from beautiful mountain ranges in Wyoming, coal that was then burned around the clock to provide Georgians with electricity.

It is appropriate that these hearings are in Atlanta, as the problem with carbon pollution is particularly evident here. I witness it firsthand nearly every day from the 36th floor of my office building a few blocks from here when I look out over a smog covered city. In Georgia we hear more and more about the negative health effects from Atlanta’s poor air quality. Our local weather reports contain smog alerts that warn the young and elderly to stay inside. When I was a kid I never heard a weather report telling me that I risked my health by going outdoors to play on a sunny summer day. I’d like to go back to a world where my new grandchildren won’t grow up worrying about such things.
We’ve all listened to news accounts that debate the impact of carbon pollution on the world. I’ve listened to those reports, but I’ve also talked to friends I trust here in Atlanta who teach at Emory or Georgia Tech, or who work for the CDC or in our remarkable medical community. My scientist and doctor friends all believe that carbon pollution in Georgia and across the U.S. fuels climate change, triggers asthma attacks and respiratory disease, worsens our air quality and contributes to more frequent, more destructive, more costly and more deadly extreme weather events. We regulate arsenic, soot and other dangerous pollutants, but our power plants have been able to inject unlimited amounts of carbon pollution into the air. The Clean Power Plan will hopefully change that.

The principal argument against efforts like the Clean Power Plan is its supposed “job-killing” impact. Having seen the terrible results of our recent recession, I worry about jobs, too. But I believe we need to take a hard look at the true economic impact of doing nothing about carbon. As a result of our reliance on coal, we pay increased health costs. We pay millions to clean up coal slurry when it escapes its holding pens and floods a river. And most concerning of all, our businesses and insurers are already calculating the devastating economic impact of climate change, which has the potential to be staggering.

As opposing to being an economic detriment, I’m hopeful the Clean Power Plan will spur the development of renewable energy technologies, leading to job creation and economic growth. I have read that the Plan will provide public health and climate benefits at $55 billion to $95 billion per year by 2030, benefits that far outweigh the cost.

In conclusion, I strongly support the Clean Power Plan. As a lawyer, I am grateful to live in a country where under the rule of law we as citizens can encourage our government to
take practical, deliberate and organized steps to improve our quality of life. As a person of faith, I believe we are stewards of our planet and are morally obligated to preserve creation. And finally, I am hopeful that my new grandchildren, who will live into the 22nd century, will enjoy a world that my grandparents, born in the 19th century, would recognize.