

ORAL ARGUMENT HEARD EN BANC  
ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2016 IN CASE NO. 15-1363  
ORAL ARGUMENT NOT SCHEDULED IN CASE NO. 17-1014

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT**

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, et al.,	)	
	)	
<i>Petitioners,</i>	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	No. 15-1363
	)	(and consolidated cases)
UNITED STATES	)	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	)	
AGENCY, et al.,	)	
	)	
<i>Respondents.</i>	)	

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA,	)	
	)	
	)	
<i>Petitioner,</i>	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	No. 17-1014
	)	(and consolidated cases)
UNITED STATES	)	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	)	
AGENCY, et al.,	)	
	)	
<i>Respondents.</i>	)	

**RESPONSE TO PETITIONERS’ MOTIONS TO DISMISS**

State and public health and environmental respondent-intervenors hereby jointly respond to the motions filed by most of the petitioners and the petitioner-

intervenors on July 15 and July 23, respectively, to dismiss the petitions for review in these sets of consolidated cases.<sup>1</sup> As explained below, the motions are premature and therefore should be denied or held in abeyance.<sup>2</sup>

The petitions in *West Virginia v. EPA* (case no. 15-1363) challenge the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan, 80 Fed. Reg. 64,662 (Oct. 23, 2015), regulations that address climate-destabilizing air pollution that is already causing grave damage to public health and the environment – damage that will reach catastrophic scale in the near future absent prompt action to sharply reduce emissions. The Clean Power Plan was adopted pursuant to Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7411(d), a provision that “speaks directly” to emissions of carbon dioxide from existing power plants, *Am. Elec. Power Co. v. Connecticut*, 564 U.S. 410, 424 (2011), the largest stationary sources of such emissions.

This Court heard oral argument *en banc* on September 27, 2016. Following the last presidential transition, EPA (Doc. 1668274), with the support of petitioners

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<sup>1</sup> The State of Wisconsin (co-petitioner in case no. 15-1363 and case no. 17-1022) and the Local Government Coalition for Renewable Energy (co-petitioner in case no. 15-1482) did not join the motions to dismiss. Respondent EPA has submitted responses in support of the motions (Doc. 1797703, Doc. 1798780).

<sup>2</sup> Movants did not approach respondent-intervenors about a dismissal agreement in either case no. 15-1363 or case no. 17-1014 and no agreement has been reached. *See* Fed. R. App. P. 42(b); D.C. Circuit Handbook of Practice and Internal Procedures at 34-35 (as amended through Dec. 1, 2018).

(Doc. 1669984), asked this Court not to issue a decision on the merits and to place the case in abeyance pending administrative review and new rulemakings.

Respondent-intervenors opposed that request (Doc. 1669759). The Court granted the request, in part, in April 2017 (Doc. 1673071), and issued a series of further 60-day abeyances. In September 2018, two years after the oral argument, and after an abeyance period had expired, respondent-intervenors moved the Court (Doc. 1748706) to decide the case. Petitioners (Doc. 1750741) and EPA (Doc. 1750684) opposed that motion, which the Court denied (Doc. 1765562).<sup>3</sup>

On July 8, 2019, EPA published a final rule that, among other things, repeals the Clean Power Plan and replaces it with emission guidelines that apply to coal-fired power plants only (natural gas plants covered by the Clean Power Plan are not regulated under the new rule), and sets no overall emissions limits by which subsequent state plans are to be evaluated.<sup>4</sup> According to EPA's published notice, the rule will become effective on September 6, 2019. 84 Fed. Reg. at 32,520.

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the petitions for review addressed in the July 23 motion, consolidated under lead case no. 17-1014, *North Dakota v. EPA*, in January 2017, EPA denied administrative petitions to reconsider the Clean Power Plan, prompting lawsuits by entities that had petitioned in *West Virginia*. The reconsideration denial cases were placed in abeyance at EPA's request (supported by petitioners) at the same time as the *West Virginia* case, in April 2017 (Doc. 1673071). The states and organizations joining this response moved to intervene in *North Dakota*, but their unopposed motions were not ruled upon.

<sup>4</sup> *Repeal of the Clean Power Plan: Emission Guidelines for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Existing Electric Utility Generating Units; Revisions to Emission Guidelines Implementing Regulations*, 84 Fed. Reg. 32,520 (July 8, 2019).

As petitioners and EPA note, precedent of this Court holds that once an agency has rescinded or replaced a regulation, litigation challenging that regulation ordinarily becomes moot. *See Akiachak Native Cmty. v. U.S. DOI*, 827 F.3d 100, 113-15 (D.C. Cir. 2016) (when challenged regulation “no longer exists,” court lacks Article III jurisdiction). Here, however, the rule repealing and replacing the Clean Power Plan does not become legally effective until September 6. Therefore, the current motions are premature, a point the federal government conceded in an analogous recent case involving a replacement rule that was not yet in effect at the time the dismissal motion was filed. *See Becerra v. U.S. DOI*, 276 F. Supp. 3d 953 (N.D. Cal. 2017) (granting states’ motion for summary judgment on their claim that Department of Interior violated the Administrative Procedure Act; noting the federal government’s concession that the case was not moot under Article III and rejecting prudential mootness argument). Consequently, the Court should deny petitioners’ current motions or hold them in abeyance until the repeal and replacement of the Clean Power Plan becomes effective on September 6, 2019.

Respondent-intervenors further note that a petition for review of the Clean Power Plan repeal and replacement rule has already been filed in this Court, *American Lung Ass’n v. EPA* (case no. 19-1140), and that additional petitions for review of this rule are expected. In that litigation, the Court likely will be asked, *inter alia*, to vacate the repeal of the Clean Power Plan. If the Court grants such

relief, it is conceivable that the petitioners in the present litigation may seek to revive the claims that they seek to dismiss here. Respondent-intervenors reserve their rights to object to any such revival in the future as precluded. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 7607(b); *Chamber of Commerce v. EPA*, 642 F.3d 192, 208 n.14 (D.C. Cir. 2011). Notably, for more than two years petitioners had every opportunity to seek judicial resolution of their claims (an outcome contemplated by the design of the Supreme Court's stay), but instead opposed respondent-intervenors' efforts to obtain that result, and repeatedly urged the Court not to resolve those claims.

For the reasons stated above, the motions should be denied as premature or held in abeyance until the repeal and replacement of the Clean Power Plan becomes effective on September 6, 2019.

Dated: July 25, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL  
DEFENSE FUND

Sean H. Donahue  
Susannah L. Weaver  
Donahue, Goldberg & Weaver LLP  
1008 Pennsylvania Ave., SE

Washington, D.C. 20003  
(202) 277-7085  
[sean@donahuegoldberg.com](mailto:sean@donahuegoldberg.com)

Tomás Carbonell  
Vickie Patton  
Martha Roberts  
Benjamin Levitan  
Environmental Defense Fund  
1875 Conn. Avenue, N.W. Ste. 600  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
(202) 572-3610

FOR THE STATE OF NEW YORK

LETITIA JAMES  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

/s/ Michael J. Myers<sup>5</sup>

---

Barbara D. Underwood  
Solicitor General  
Steven C. Wu  
Deputy Solicitor General  
David S. Frankel  
Assistant Solicitor General  
Michael J. Myers  
Morgan A. Costello  
Brian M. Lusignan  
Assistant Attorneys General  
The Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224  
(518) 776-2400

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<sup>5</sup> Counsel for the State of New York represents that the other parties listed in the signature blocks herein consent to the filing of this motion.

## FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

XAVIER BECERRA  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Robert W. Byrne  
Sally Magnani  
Senior Assistant Attorneys General  
David A. Zonana  
Supervising Deputy Attorney General  
Jonathan Wiener  
M. Elaine Meckenstock  
Timothy Sullivan  
Elizabeth Rumsey  
Deputy Attorneys General  
1515 Clay Street  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 879-1300

Attorneys for the State of California,  
by and through Governor Gavin  
Newsom, the California Air Resources  
Board, and Attorney General Xavier  
Becerra

## FOR THE STATE OF DELAWARE

KATHLEEN JENNINGS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Valerie S. Edge  
Deputy Attorney General  
Delaware Department of Justice  
102 West Water Street, 3d Floor  
Dover, DE 19904  
(302) 739-4636

FOR THE STATE OF  
CONNECTICUT

WILLIAM TONG  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Matthew I. Levine  
Scott N. Koschwitz  
Assistant Attorneys General  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 120, 55 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06141-0120  
(860) 808-5250

## FOR THE STATE OF HAWAII

CLARE E. CONNORS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
William F. Cooper  
Deputy Attorney General  
465 S. King Street, Room 200  
Honolulu, HI 96813  
(808) 586-4070

## FOR THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Matthew J. Dunn  
Gerald T. Karr  
Daniel I. Rottenberg  
Assistant Attorneys General  
69 W. Washington St., 18th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 814-3816

## FOR THE STATE OF MAINE

AARON M. FREY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Mary Sauer  
Laura Jensen  
Assistant Attorneys General  
6 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
(207) 626-8800

## FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

MAURA HEALEY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Melissa A. Hoffer  
Christophe Courchesne  
Assistant Attorneys General  
Environmental Protection Division  
One Ashburton Place, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 963-2423

## FOR THE STATE OF IOWA

THOMAS J. MILLER  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Jacob Larson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Office of Iowa Attorney General  
Hoover State Office Building  
1305 E. Walnut Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
(515) 281-5341

## FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND

BRIAN E. FROSH  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Steven M. Sullivan  
Solicitor General  
200 St. Paul Place, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
(410) 576-6427

## FOR THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

KEITH ELLISON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Karen D. Olson  
Deputy Attorney General  
Max Kieley  
Assistant Attorney General  
445 Minnesota Street, Suite 900  
St. Paul, MN 55101-2127  
(651) 757-1244

Attorneys for State of Minnesota, by  
and through the Minnesota Pollution  
Control Agency



## FOR THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO    FOR THE STATE OF OREGON

HECTOR BALDERAS  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Anne Minard  
Special Assistant Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
408 Galisteo Street  
Villagra Building  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
(505) 490-4045

ELLEN F. ROSENBLUM  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Paul Garrahan  
Attorney-in-Charge  
Natural Resources Section  
Oregon Department of Justice  
1162 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301-4096  
(503) 947-4593

FOR THE STATE OF RHODE  
ISLAND

PETER F. NERONHA  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Gregory S. Schultz  
Special Assistant Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
150 South Main Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
(401) 274-4400

## FOR THE STATE OF VERMONT

THOMAS J. DONOVAN, JR.  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Nicholas F. Persampieri  
Assistant Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05609-1001  
(802) 828-3186

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
VIRGINIA

MARK HERRING  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Donald D. Anderson  
Deputy Attorney General  
Paul Kugelman, Jr.  
Sr. Asst. Attorney General and Chief  
Environmental Section  
202 North 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 786-3811

FOR THE STATE OF  
WASHINGTON

ROBERT W. FERGUSON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Katharine G. Shirey  
Assistant Attorney General  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 40117  
Olympia, WA 98504-0117  
(360) 586-6769

FOR THE DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA

KARL A. RACINE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL  
Loren L. AliKhan  
Solicitor General  
Office of the Attorney General  
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 630  
South  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
(202) 727-6287

FOR BROWARD COUNTY,  
FLORIDA

ANDREW J. MEYERS  
COUNTY ATTORNEY  
Mark A. Journey  
Assistant County Attorney  
Broward County Attorney's Office  
155 S. Andrews Avenue, Room 423  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
(954) 357-7600

FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

ZACHARY W. CARTER  
CORPORATION COUNSEL  
Christopher G. King  
Kathleen C. Schmid  
Senior Counsel  
New York City Law Department  
100 Church Street  
New York, NY 10007  
(212) 356-2314

FOR THE CITY OF BOULDER

TOM CARR  
CITY ATTORNEY  
Debra S. Kalish  
City Attorney's Office  
1777 Broadway, Second Floor  
Boulder, CO 80302  
(303) 441-3020

FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO

EDWARD N. SISKEL  
Corporation Counsel  
BENNA RUTH SOLOMON  
Deputy Corporation Counsel  
30 N. LaSalle Street, Suite 800  
Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 744-7764

FOR THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA      FOR THE CITY OF SOUTH MIAMI

MARCEL S. PRATT  
CITY SOLICITOR  
Scott J. Schwarz  
Patrick K. O'Neill  
Divisional Deputy City Solicitors  
The City of Philadelphia  
Law Department  
One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1595  
(215) 685-6135

FOR AMERICAN LUNG  
ASSOCIATION, CLEAN AIR  
COUNCIL, CLEAN WISCONSIN,  
CONSERVATION LAW  
FOUNDATION, AND THE OHIO  
ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL  
Ann Brewster Weeks  
James P. Duffy  
Clean Air Task Force  
114 State Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
Boston, MA 02109  
(617) 624-0234, ext. 156

FOR CENTER FOR  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Clare Lakewood  
Howard M. Crystal  
Center for Biological Diversity  
1212 Broadway, Suite 800  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(415) 844-7121

THOMAS F. PEPE  
CITY ATTORNEY  
City of South Miami  
1450 Madruga Avenue, Ste 202  
Coral Gables, Florida 33146  
(305) 667-2564

FOR NATURAL RESOURCES  
DEFENSE COUNCIL

David Doniger  
Benjamin Longstreth  
Melissa J. Lynch  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
1152 15th Street, N.W., Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 513-6256

FOR SIERRA CLUB

Joanne Spalding  
Andres Restrepo  
Alejandra Núñez  
Sierra Club  
2101 Webster Street, Suite 1300  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(415) 977-5725

Vera Pardee  
726 Euclid Ave.  
Berkley, CA 94708  
(858) 717-1448

Howard I. Fox  
David S. Baron  
Timothy D. Ballo  
Earthjustice

1625 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,  
Suite 702  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 667-4500

FOR WESTERN HIGHLANDS  
CONSERVANCY, OHIO VALLEY  
ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION,  
COAL RIVER MOUNTAIN  
WATCH, KANAWHA FOREST  
COALITION, MON VALLEY  
CLEAN AIR COALITION, AND  
KEEPERS OF THE MOUNTAINS  
FOUNDATION

William V. DePaulo  
122 N Court Street, Suite 300  
Lewisburg, WV 24901  
(304) 342-5588

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH TYPE-VOLUME LIMIT**

The undersigned attorney, Michael J. Myers, hereby certifies:

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*/s/ Michael J. Myers*  
MICHAEL J. MYERS

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Response to Petitioners' Motions to Dismiss was filed on July 25, 2019 using the Court's CM/ECF system, and that, therefore, service was accomplished upon counsel of record by the Court's system.

/s/ Michael J. Myers  
MICHAEL J. MYERS