

9/25/14 DEP Listening Session – EPA Clean Power Plan – Harrisburg, PA

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Good afternoon:

My name is John Bechtel. I'm 66 years old, retired, and live in Harrisburg. I'm an active member in two environmental groups. One is secular, one is faith-based, and both work hard for the cause of clean air in Pennsylvania. But I will speak in my own voice today, and I'd like to do that by first telling you a short story from my personal life. It's a sort of metaphor for why I put so much time into the climate change movement.

A few years ago, when I was still teaching a 4th grade Sunday School class, one of the kid's parents, an active duty Army Sergeant, gave me what was *for him* an urgent call. It had nothing to do with Sunday School or his 4th grader, for she was away on a church mission trip with his wife at the time. Rather it was about the urgent need to put his family's living quarters on the military base into spic n span shape ASAP. The departure date for his next post-of-duty in Hawaii was closing in fast. But with his wife and daughter out of town and unable to help, he had fallen behind schedule with the clean-up work, and needed to catch up fast.

As I swept, dusted, and scrubbed alongside my friend on that Saturday, it slowly dawned on me that his all-out effort was motivated in large part by what you might call a "Code of Honor" among military families. You have a *duty* to those who follow you. You *owe* it to that next family to restore your living quarters to tip-top shape before you go on to that next post-of-duty.

I can't say where I'll go for *my* next "post-of-duty". Unless I clean up *my* act soon, it may look and feel a lot more like God's idea of Afghanistan than Hawaii. And while this story may work well enough for me, it's actually a very poor metaphor for the gravity of the threat of climate change, which goes far beyond the threat that soot, ash, and trash pose to our environment and our health. But as long as I'm still around, I'll do my part to restore our corner of "Mother Earth" to somewhat the same shape as I found Her, upon my arrival in 1948. That's what I feel is the duty I owe to those who will follow.

And that's why I pray that you will put in place, monitor, and above all enforce a strong Pennsylvania version of the **EPA Clean Power Plan** to limit industrial carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants. The science is settled. Climate change driven by global warming poses an existential threat to all Americans. We have a sacred duty to leave our children with a safe climate. But like my friend in the story, we are falling behind schedule on our clean-up job, and we need to catch up fast. Carbon emissions are the primary cause of global warming, and coal-fired power plants are the primary cause of carbon emissions in Pennsylvania as well as the USA. The **EPA Clean Power Plan** is a great start. But please ensure that it is only the beginning of our honorable clean-up job.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

John D. Bechtel Jr. 9/25/14