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LATINO GROUPS NATIONWIDE SUPPORT LONG AWAITED HEALTH PROTECTIONS FOR MERCURY AND AIR TOXICS

Latino groups applaud the Obama Administration's important new standard to control and curb mercury and other toxic air pollution from power plants

December 21, 2011 (WASHINGTON) Today, EPA announced the adoption of historic safeguards against mercury and other toxic air pollution which will help to protect our children from increased risk of brain damage, cerebral palsy and other neuro-developmental problems. The Mercury and Air Toxics standard, or MATR is a major new measure to protect kids and families from mercury, toxics and other pollution from power plants.

These new health safeguards will reduce mercury emissions from power plants up to 90 percent, and vastly reduce levels of the toxic soup of other emissions that also lead to numerous health problems. Among the most dangerous of these pollutants is mercury, a neurotoxin that damages the developing brains and nervous systems of fetuses and young children. Mercury exposure can lead to delayed developmental milestones, delayed speech and other language problems, reduced IQ, problems with motor skills, and a laundry list of other health issues.

This rule protects our health while also creating thousands of jobs from the manufacturing, engineering, installation and maintenance of pollution controls to meet these standards, potentially including 46,000 short-term construction jobs and 8,000 long-term utility jobs.

This rule and these cost-savings are especially important to the Latino community because according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Latino children have higher levels of mercury in their bodies compared with non-Hispanic white children. With 39 percent of Latinos living within 30 miles of a power plant, emissions controls are a critically needed and welcome safeguard.

Numerous Latino groups nationwide have joined together to thank the Obama administration for taking this important step towards protecting communities nationwide. Several signers to the letter remarked on the importance of this action:

Rafael Fantauzzi, President of the **National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc. (NPRC) and Chair of the National Latino Coalition on Climate Change (NLCCC)** said:

“Today President Obama has taken an important step towards ensuring a safer, healthier future for our children by announcing a new strong standard for mercury and air toxics. NLCCC member organizations represent many Latino families who live near power plants that spew dangerous toxics into the air we breathe. Mercury is one of the leading causes of preventable birth defects in children like brain damage, cerebral palsy and other

developmental problems. We are calling on our leaders in Congress to let this important protection stay in place to protect our children.”

Brent Wilkes, Executive Director of the **League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)** added:

“We support the new mercury and toxic air pollution rule announced today because it means that the health of our communities and families everywhere across the U.S. will face decreased risks for serious diseases associated with these pollutants. One of the most harmful effects of mercury pollution are birth defects and other developmental issues and with 39 percent of Latinos living near a power plant, we could not be happier to have this important new protection in place. The increased health costs and other expenses associated with these pollutants is also too heavy a burden to ask future generations to bear. These safeguards should be implemented immediately and without question by Congress.”

Roberto Carmona of **Voces Verdes** applauded the rule, adding:

“Voces Verdes applauds the Obama Administration’s important new standard to control and curb mercury and other toxic air pollution from power plants. This historic rule will benefit our nation as a whole and Latino families everywhere preventing the harmful effects of these pollutants, such as respiratory diseases, developmental problems and heart attacks in our communities. This rule protects our health while also creating thousands of jobs from the manufacturing, engineering, installation and maintenance of pollution controls to meet these standards, potentially including 46,000 short-term construction jobs and 8,000 long-term utility jobs. This is an important move to protect the public health while ensuring a brighter future for our communities.”

Other signers to the letter include:

Dr. Elena Rios, National Hispanic Medical Association; Mark Magana, National Latino Coalition on Climate Change, Rafael Fantauzzi, National Puerto Rican Coalition; Mildred Real, Common Ground for Conservation – America Verde; Juan Parras, Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS); Antonio Gonzalez, William C. Velasquez Institute; Raquelle Seda, Latino Family Services; Irma Munoz, Mujeres de La Tierra; Luis Olmedo, Centro Cívico del Valle; Refugio Mata, Project Economic Refugee.

Read the letter at www.vocesverdes.org

Voces Verdes is the independent, non-partisan voice of Latino leaders for the environment. We are Latino business owners and community leaders who advocate for sound environmental policy and recognize the importance of balancing economic growth, environmental protection and prosperity. www.vocesverdes.org