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**New Report: Half of U.S. Breathes Dangerous Levels of Smog;
Lax State Enforcement Faulted**

Report from the Center for American Progress and Center for Progressive Reform documents compliance and enforcement of ozone pollution standards in 10 of the nation's 11 most populous states

Washington, DC—In 10 of the nation's 11 most populous states, well over half the population lives in areas with smog so bad that pollution levels routinely exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's safety standards, according to a new study by the Center for American Progress and the Center for Progressive Reform that examines state enforcement of clean air laws.

The report, *Paper Tigers and Killer Air: How Weak Enforcement Leaves Communities Vulnerable to Smog*, reveals that state environmental agencies in the 10 profiled states lack a sufficient number of inspectors to monitor industrial emissions and enforce the law—in large part due to declining federal grants to state and local air quality agencies, which are primarily responsible for enforcing federal clean air standards.

These states (California, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas) contain a total of more than 158,000 sites with permits to emit ozone pollution. But they report having fewer than 1,100 inspectors, meaning that on average each inspector is responsible for inspecting 145 permitted facilities. California and Texas each have more than 50,000 permitted polluting facilities, dwarfing the other most populous states, and they also have the worst ratio of polluting facilities to inspectors: in Texas, 352 sites per inspector; and in California, 166 sites per inspector.

“When it comes to ozone pollution, the cop is off the beat,” says report co-author Rena Steinzor, a member of the board of the Center for Progressive Reform and a law professor at the University of Maryland. “Laws that aren't enforced aren't respected. Local restaurants

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and beauty parlors, and even cars in many states, must be inspected far more often than major polluters. No wonder the nation's children suffer from an epidemic of asthma. EPA and the states' approach makes it much easier for polluters to cut corners, avoid expenses, violate permit terms, and thus emit more air pollution than they are allowed. If the IRS took the same approach, the nation would go broke."

The paltry number of state inspectors is a reflection of cutbacks in federal funding. Since 1993, federal grants to state and local air quality agencies have declined by 25 percent when adjusted for inflation, and President Bush's FY 2007 budget calls for another significant cut of \$15.6 million from a current budget of \$172.7 million.

In addition, upon taking office in 2001, the Bush administration greatly relaxed inspection requirements on states. Now states must inspect polluting sources—including factories spewing tens of thousands of tons of harmful air pollutants—just once every five years.

"America's children are paying the price for this neglect," said Reece Rushing, associate director for regulatory policy at the Center for American Progress. "During 'code red' or 'code orange' days, parents are faced with an absurd choice—keep their children indoors when they could be out playing or risk exposing them to unsafe air. We can solve this problem. But we must take steps to strengthen state enforcement of clean air standards. The new Congress has an opportunity to set a new course by renewing federal investment in state and local air quality agencies and insisting on more frequent inspections."

To learn about the Center for American Progress, see <http://www.americanprogress.org>. To learn about the Center for Progressive Reform, see <http://www.progressivereform.org>.

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