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## OpEd: Suspending work on Clean Power Plan is not healthy for Utahns

By David Sundwall

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As a physician who has spent many years trying to improve the health of my patients and communities here in Utah, the recent debate about the clean air standards in our state has been troubling. President Obama's ambitious Clean Power Plan, which aims to limit the amount of carbon pollution that power plants can release, has been temporarily put on hold by a ruling in the Supreme Court. The court's decision has led Utah and some other states to postpone their compliance planning.

Although as a medical professional I am not equipped to comment on the economic impacts of the proposed regulations, I can speak to the benefits that reducing power plant emissions would have for the health of our communities. As a resident and practitioner in Utah, I have serious concerns about health affects of polluted air on my patients, especially those with long-term asthma, heart, or lung diseases. The care for these patients is costly, and I wonder if critics of the Clean Power Plan have considered the health cost savings from not having to treat the

Utah's natural beauty is stunning and our geography is without parallel. However, some parts of the state, depending on prevailing weather patterns, can naturally trap pollutants from escaping, which aggravates the health consequences on some of our residents. Places like Salt Lake City, Provo and Logan consistently rank in the top 10 cities with the worst air pollution in the U.S.

In 2014, 76 percent of our state's electricity generation came from coal. These coal-fired power plants emit hazardous pollutants into the air, such as ozone, particulate matter and carbon dioxide, that contribute to the hazy smog that those of us living near these plants know all too well. Furthermore, the health consequences of breathing such contaminated air has been linked with increasing cases of lung disease, certain types of cancer, infant mortality, and even diabetes and obesity.

In short, Utah's air pollution is a serious public health issue. Despite the mounting evidence of poor air quality and its effect on public health, the Utah Division of Air Quality (UDAQ) decided to suspend its formal planning process for the state's implementation of the Clean Power Plan following the Supreme Court's stay ruling. Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes even praised the Court's decision as a major victory, but I am at a loss to understand why. I don't like heavy government regulations, but I believe the concerns of the energy industry and those of public health officials should be addressed properly. Without question, the air must be cleaned up to save lives of those at risk from chronic illnesses, and to improve the quality of life for everyone in Utah.

Residents like myself are already aware of these negative consequences of our outdated power plants. Based on one survey done by Yale University, 74 percent of Utahns would support research into renewable energy sources, 70 percent indicated they could support regulating CO2 as a pollutant, and the most of those surveyed said they could support more strict CO2 limits on existing coal-fired power plants.

I am hopeful that our state's leaders will develop a solid plan to meet the Clean Power Plan standards that will result in cleaner air, improved health, and a stronger economy.

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