

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2026

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

With air quality reaching dangerous levels, we request the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) take all appropriate measures under the U.S.-Canada Air Quality Agreement (AQA) to address the impact of Canadian wildfire smoke on families in the Great Lakes and the Northeast.

Ongoing wildfire smoke has significantly worsened air quality throughout the U.S. On July 16, the EPA's Air Quality Index (AQI) reading reached "Hazardous" levels well over 300 across the Great Lakes region.¹ Many areas in the Northeast reached "Very Unhealthy" levels of 200 or more. For example, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had an AQI of 566; Chicago had an AQI of 701; Cleveland, Ohio, had an AQI of 361; and New York City had an AQI of 202.² Such poor air quality has significant harmful effects on residents, in particular on seniors, children, and individuals with preexisting conditions such as cardiovascular or respiratory issues.

The U.S.-Canada AQA is an important tool to prevent air pollution from crossing international borders. In recent years, the Canadian government has elected to reduce the number of controlled or prescribed burns.³ This has prompted criticism both domestically and abroad. Responsible wildfire management, such as controlled burns, is critical to reducing the frequency and severity of wildfires and protect families from harm.⁴ We encourage the EPA to utilize tools in the U.S.-Canada AQA to support responsible wildfire management strategies by the Canadian government and to protect Americans against similar occurrences in the future.

Article V of the U.S.-Canada AQA requires both nations to consult, upon the request of either the U.S. or Canada, on any "actions, activities, or projects that may be causing significant transboundary air pollution."⁵ Following consultation, either nation may request the International Joint Commission help in resolving the dispute and pursue other avenues if necessary.

Record-breaking wildfire smoke is inflicting real harm on American families. We cannot allow this to continue. Canada must meet its clean air promise and prevent future wildfires from impacting our communities.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important matter.

¹ <https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow/>

² <https://www.airnow.gov/>

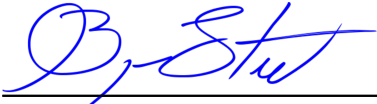
³ <https://pcweb2.azureedge.net/-/media/agen/dp-pd/pdf/transition/Appearance-before-the-Standing-Committee-on-Environment-and-Sustainable-Development-May-3-2022.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/Rx-Fire-Strategy.pdf>

⁵

<https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/Agreement%20Between%20the%20Government%20of%20the%20United%20States%20of%20America%20and%20the%20Government%20of%20Canada%20on%20Air%20Quality.pdf>

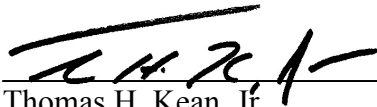
Sincerely,



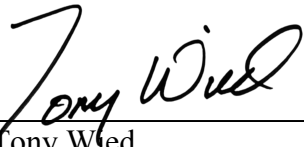
Bryan Steil
Member of Congress



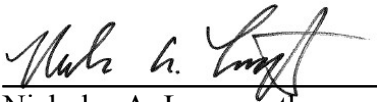
Mike Carey
Member of Congress



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Tony Wied
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Rob Bresnahan, Jr.
Member of Congress



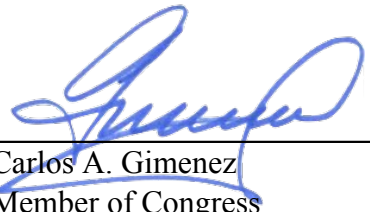
Jefferson Van Drew
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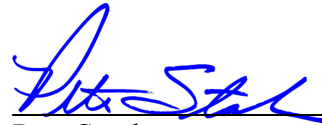
Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



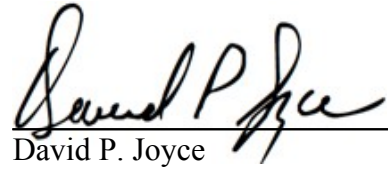
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