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August 4, 2010

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As your administration prepares for possible energy legislation here at home, and for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun, Mexico, I urge you to take steps to address the issue of black carbon pollution around the world. Scientific research is increasingly pointing to black carbon, a component of soot, as a major culprit in the warming of the atmosphere. Research from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory has shown that soot is the primary culprit in the melting of the Himalayan Glaciers, upon which hundreds of millions depend for freshwater. And according to Stanford University Professor Mark Jacobson, who just this week unveiled a comprehensive 15-year study on the impacts of black carbon, "controlling soot may be the only method of significantly slowing Arctic warming within the next two decades."

In spite of these reports, international negotiations that are intended to address these issues have all but ignored the impact of black carbon. Technologies to mitigate black carbon impacts already exist and have been deployed in many places around the globe, reducing pollution in the transportation, industrial, and energy sectors. Although there is room to improve, the United States, despite being the world's largest economy, is responsible for only 6 percent of global soot emissions. In contrast, China and India—which, according to the *Economist,* host 27 of the 30 most polluted cities in the world—are responsible for 25-35 percent of global black carbon pollution. The problem is particularly grave in China, where black carbon pollution doubled in the years between 2000 and 2006.

Deploying pollution control technologies can have an immediate and measurable impact on the damage caused by black carbon. Unlike carbon dioxide, which can linger in the atmosphere for well over a century, black carbon persists for only several weeks; addressing black carbon thus may provide the fastest method to limit the ongoing loss of Arctic Ice and the Himalayan Glaciers. In addition to delaying the deleterious effects of climate change, reducing black carbon will have direct benefits to global health. It is estimated that cutting black carbon pollution could help reduce the estimated 1.5 million premature deaths that result from respiratory diseases each year.

In pursuing international policies through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, I hope you will take steps to hold all major black carbon polluters accountable. Domestically, we ought to prioritize the export of proven mitigation technologies as well as further deploy them in areas of our own economy, such as the diesel vehicle fleet. As demonstrated here in the United States, these policies and technologies can be efficient, cost-effective, and have immediate and measurable benefits. Their worldwide adoption will help reduce countless avoidable respiratory disease deaths, while simultaneously addressing climate change and improving the environment.

Sincerely,

Jim Webb
United States Senator