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Contact: Amy Attwood
Tel: 720-840-4912
Email: amy@amyattwood.com
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EVANS, Colo. – April 2, 2015 – The Rocky Mountain Energy Forum, in partnership with Energy Proud and the Greeley Chamber of Commerce, held a Press Conference and Luncheon today to discuss the impact of the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) proposed Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to Colorado and our nation.

The EPA has proposed to lower the standard for ground-level ozone from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 65 to 70 ppb, and is considering lowering the standard to 60 ppb. According to a study conducted by NERA Economic Consulting (NERA) for the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the proposed standard “could be the most expensive regulation ever imposed on the American public.”ⁱ In Colorado alone, NERA estimates that the state could lose \$16 billion in Gross State Product over a 25-year period, as well as 10,525 jobs per year.ⁱⁱ These losses would be driven by the fact it could become harder to obtain permits to manufacture goods and build infrastructure. It could also increase energy costs, halt new business development or expansion, or worse, shut down existing operations.

Congressman Ken Buck (CO-4) expressed his concerns about the widespread negative impact of the proposed standards. “The job growth and economic gains that we have been experiencing across Colorado and our nation could be thrown into reverse,” he noted. “If there is one takeaway from today’s discussions, it’s the need to educate the public about the far-reaching effects of this regulation. This proposed standard could impact not only oil and natural gas development, manufacturing and power plants, but also small businesses, like bakeries, dry cleaners and gas stations – and even our agriculture industry.”

Weld County Commissioner, Sean Conway, echoed the Congressman’s concerns. “Weld County has been experiencing tremendous job growth and we are confident that it will remain so given our region’s diverse set of industries,”^{iiiiv} he said. “However, if companies aren’t able to build or expand in this area – or worse, if they have to close operations – this would be devastating to our local economy.”

Many experts are questioning why the standard even needs to be lowered. EPA’s own data shows that, under current regulations, U.S. ozone levels declined by 18 percent between 2000 and 2013.^{v,vi} “EPA’s current standard is protective of public health; and existing emission control regulations are projected to continue to reduce ozone levels in the years ahead,” notes Ted Steichen, Senior Policy Advisor for the American Petroleum Institute. He went on to say, “EPA’s proposed standard is so low that even pristine areas, such as Yellowstone National Park, might not be able to meet the new standard.”

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Commissioner Conway also spoke of the challenges that states and localities are having trying to meet the current standard, “Many states, including Colorado, have areas in nonattainment and are still in the process of implementing plans to meet the current standard. In fact, some of the tools needed to begin the implementation of the 2008 standard are only now beginning to appear.” He concluded, “States and local governments should be allowed to meet the current standard before lowering it. The EPA should not continue to move the goal post and further penalize states and businesses.”^{vii}

Congressman Buck summed up his concerns about the potential economic impact of the proposed regulations, “I hope that EPA considers the broader impact of their proposal, because losing a job with health insurance benefits could end up hurting those that this standard is designed to protect.”

For more information, contact Amy Attwood at 720-840-4912, amy@amyattwood.com.

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ⁱ “Ozone Regulations”. National Association of Manufacturers. Retrieved from <http://www.nam.org/ozone/>

ⁱⁱ “What Could New Ozone Regulations Cost Colorado?”. National Association of Manufacturers. Retrieved from <http://www.nam.org/Issues/Energy-and-Environment/Ozone/State-Data/Colorado-Ozone-Data-2015.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Weld workforce surviving oil-price decline”. The Coloradan. February 27, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.coloradoan.com/story/money/2015/02/26/weld-workforce-surges-oil-price-decline/24076701/>

^{iv} “Weld County employment last year grew most in nation, fueled by oil and gas”. Greeley Tribune. March 20, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.greeleytribune.com/news/15563059-113/weld-employment-last-year-grew-most-in-nation-fueled-by>

^v “API applauds congressional proposals to maintain current ozone standards”. API. March 18, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.api.org/news-and-media/news/newsitems/2015/mar-2015/api-applauds-congressional-proposals-to-maintain-current-ozone-standards>

^{vi} “National Trends in Ozone Levels”. EPA. Retrieved from <http://www.epa.gov/airtrends/ozone.html>.

^{vii} “API recommends that EPA retain the current primary NAAQS for ozone”. API. Retrieved from <http://www.api.org/~media/files/policy/ozone-naaqs/api-recommendations-naaqs-ozone-executive-summary.pdf>