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Flood in the Midwest. Severe weather events resulting from climate change are threatening the reliability of power generation sources in the Midwest region of the United States. Photo by [Gburba](#) | Adobe Stock

Power plants are a problem, but is the U.S. Clean Power Plan the solution?

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Human activities are driving climate change and as the head of one of the leading emitters of greenhouse gas (GHG) U.S. President Barack Obama made a commitment during the Paris climate accord to significantly reduce GHG emissions. To achieve this commitment the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the Clean Power Plan (CPP) to reduce carbon pollution from the largest source of GHG emissions, power plants. While the stay of implementation by the U.S. Supreme Court brings the merits of the CPP's final rule into question, there are consequences of inaction that should be considered by the courts before deciding the future of the CPP.

As one of the leading emitter in the world the commitment by President Barack Obama during the Paris climate accord to significantly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions sent a global message that the U.S. stood for climate action. The development of the Clean Power Plan (CPP) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is a momentous step toward combating climate change that aims to reduce carbon pollution, avert environmental threats and assist in the transition to clean energy. The EPA faces a significant barrier in reaching this goal due to the Supreme Court decision to stay the implementation of the CPP until the final rule can be [reviewed](#) by the courts. While the merits of the final rule are up for debate, there is little question that considerable steps need to occur to mitigate climate change. Identifying the

sources of climate change can assist in understanding the consequences of inaction and the reasons that CPP is a critical step toward mitigating climate change.

The largest source of emissions

The CPP aims to reduce the impact carbon pollution has on the environment and the nation by establishing national pollution standards for new, modified and reconstructed power plants. Power plants account for [31 percent](#) of total GHG emissions in the U.S. The EPA estimates that the new standards will reduce carbon pollution from the power sector to [32 percent below](#) 2005 levels. That reduction is projected to cut the carbon pollution that is driving climate change and improve the health of the citizens by reducing exposure to harmful pollutants, such as soot and smog. Through the advancement of clean energy, states can develop long-term strategies that when deployed will reduce the impact of climate change. This makes the CPP a critical step that sets the foundation to reduce the impact that carbon pollution has on the environment and the nation.

Irreparable harm

States that opposed the CPP argue the final rule creates irreparable harm, but ignore the harm that their inaction creates for the nation. The coal industry is critical to the economy of many states which are in opposition to the CPP. Coal mining companies have argued the regulation required by the CPP will [negatively affect](#) the businesses by interfering with grid reliability and raising consumer rates. These assertions ignore other factors that should be considered, such as extreme weather conditions, which are already a [threat to grid reliability](#) in the Midwest. In 2011, the Midwest experienced 11 weather-related disasters that resulted in roughly [\\$1 billion in damage](#). As the climate continues to warm scientist anticipate that [extreme weather events](#) will become more frequent which put regions, like the Midwest, at increased risk of being impacted by climate change. Opposing the CPP causes irreparable harm to states in the Midwest that have already experienced the adverse impacts of climate change.

Transition to clean energy

Mitigating climate requires investing in clean energy technologies to shift the dependence from carbon-intensive energy sources to cleaner sources of energy. [Persistent droughts, severe weather events, bigger storms and frequent wildfires](#) have risen concerns that moving toward a [low carbon society](#) that is less polluting to the environment is essential to averting the impacts of climate change. Investing in clean energy can [reduce GHG emissions by 50 percent](#), [reduce water usage by 80 percent](#) and help businesses achieve [zero-waste-to-landfill](#). Transitioning to cleaner sources of energy creates immense opportunities for economic growth and promotes environmental sustainability.

The consequences of inaction

Mitigating climate change is in the best interest of the U.S. and doing so requires the courts uphold the final rule. The CPP can improve the health of the environment, lessen the environmental impacts of climate change and assist in the transition from carbon-intensive energy sources. Reducing the amount of GHG emissions improves the health of the environment and benefits citizens. Transitioning to less carbon-intensive energy sources limits the frequency of extreme weather events in the U.S. Limiting the occurrences of extreme weather events can mitigate the risks that climate change is creating for the nation's citizens as well as lower the financial costs of climate disasters.

The U.S. courts have a very important decision to make in the coming months and it is in the best interest of the nation that they choose to uphold the final rule.

Tomesha Campbell is the Mobilization Coordinator for [Our Task's Global 2100 Project](#). The Global 2100 Project empowers youth to become global thinkers by appealing to the older generations to work with them to make needed changes now rather than later. You can learn more about the Global 2100 project [here](#).

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