

# Let EPA curb greenhouse gases to protect public health

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**What's the news:** The U.S. Supreme Court should affirm the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and have been proven to inflict major health problems, argues a friend-of-the-court brief (PDF) filed by the AMA, the American Thoracic Society and more than 15 other leading medical organizations and dozens of U.S. public health leaders.

“Higher temperatures and punishing heat waves that contribute to illness and injury are two prominent effects of climate change that harm public health,” says the *amicus* brief, filed in the case of *West Virginia v. Environmental Protection Agency*.

“America's leading physician-member medical organizations and public health experts submit this brief to draw the court's attention to the exigent health threats from climate change. Driven by fossil fuel emissions, climate pollutants harm public health across every segment of American society and in every state,” the brief says. “The consequences of climate change impair pulmonary, cardiovascular, neurological, immunological, behavioral health, and other vital systems and functions.”

Learn with the AMA how physicians can see health care through a climate lens.

**Why it's important:** At stake in this case is whether the Supreme Court will affirm the agency's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from U.S. power plants or whether the Court will place restrictions on the agency's ability to fully respond to the climate crisis.

“Regulation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions are necessary to mitigate the scale of intensifying public health harms associated with climate change,” the medical organizations' *amicus* brief says. “The need is urgent, and the quality and length of lives are at stake. The court should affirm EPA's ability to carry out its mandate to protect public health by regulating carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.”

Read about why physicians see climate change as a health emergency.



**Learn more:** Among the organizations joining the AMA and the American Thoracic Society in filing the brief are the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians, and the American College of Environmental and Occupational Medicine.

The American Thoracic Society offers patient educational materials detailing the health effects of climate change.