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Editor,

I was dismayed to read a recent letter to the editor that took members of our Alabama Congressional delegation to task for opposing the Environmental Protection Agency's attempt to raise ozone standards. The writer used purely anecdotal reflections, rather than hard scientific evidence, to sustain his position, and he completely ignored the significant damage that increased standards will bring to job creation and economic development efforts in Alabama.

We must ask ourselves who will suffer most in that environment. The working poor and most middle-class families will certainly struggle to pay for energy costs that will quickly spiral out of control. Employers, and especially those in the manufacturing sector, will be forced to choose between the workers they employ and the increasingly expensive utility bills they will be required to pay. Perhaps the bureaucrats at the EPA, who enjoy job security with the over-reaching current administration, should take a moment to consider how their regulations might threaten the jobs of their fellow Americans.

It is exactly this kind of "Chicken Little environmentalism" that has hindered our economic recovery on both the state and national levels and caused businesses, both large and small, to worry about rising energy costs. In these tough times, we need more opportunities to put money in our pockets, not get pick pocketed by the EPA. I want to applaud those who speak up to protect Alabama's jobs, and it is time the rest of us join in the chorus to tell the EPA to back down.

Increasing standards to the unreasonable levels demanded by the EPA would deeply affect Alabama, whose energy production relies heavily upon coal fired plants. Such plants demand significant capital investment to construct, yet they are low cost to operate, which results in affordable and dependable energy for consumers.

In addition to opposing the use of coal, a domestic energy resource that is readily available, many of these same environmental extremists are working against the production of nuclear energy. If you take these two important sources out of our energy equation, you are left with an energy deficit that would be exceedingly expensive, if even at all possible, to fill.

The balance between economic development, energy production and environmentalism is a delicate one, and I am convinced that increasing ozone standards to the levels demanded by the EPA will send the scale tipping in the wrong direction. Only a measured, common sense conservative approach will improve our economy, create much needed jobs and provide the reasonable environmental protections that our children and grandchildren deserve.

We have made progress ensuring we have clean air and water, and I'm committed to working with our citizens and utilities to make more improvements. However, these job-killing regulations are clearly not part of the solution.

Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh
Alabama PSC Commissioner – Place 1