

Church leaders: Bush's clean-air policy foul: The Clear Skies initiative

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One hundred Christian leaders told President Bush in a pointed Earth Day rebuke that they have “grave moral concern” about his clean-air policy. The letter, coordinated by the National Council of Churches, accused Bush of weakening air-quality standards and putting the elderly and young children at particular risk through his “Clear Skies” initiative.

The letter faulted Bush’s plan for not setting reduction standards for carbon emissions from power plants, which are believed to be the primary source of global warming. In addition, the letter said “powerful corporate interests have had disproportionate influence” in shaping environmental policy. “We believe that the administration’s energy, clean air and climate change programs prolong our dependence on fossil fuels which is depleting Earth’s resources, poisoning its climate, punishing the poor, constricting sustainable economic growth and jeopardizing global security and peace,” said the letter released April 22.

The missive, followed by a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, was signed by officials from the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the National Council of Churches, the Swedenborgian Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Church of the Brethren, among others.

President Bush was in Maine on April 22 to unveil a new program to protect wetlands but did not mention his Clear Skies initiative. “Since 2001, the condition of America’s land, air and water has improved,” he said.

In a separate statement, leaders of the Reform Jewish movement also faulted Bush for his environmental policy. “We ignore the environment at our peril,” warned Barbara Weinstein, legislative director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. -*Religion News Service*