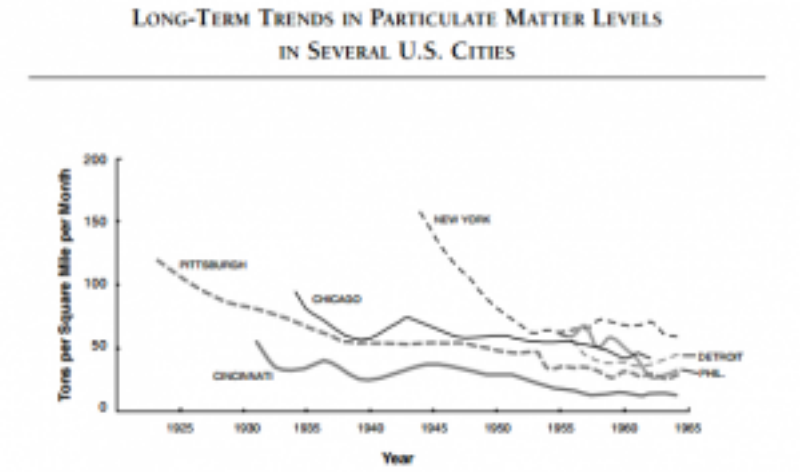
The Moms Clean Air Force — a “special project” of the Environmental Working Group supported by activist like 350.org and the Union of Concerned Scientists— landed on Capitol Hill last week to oppose the nomination of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to head the EPA because, as they put it, “his confirmation would be an assault on health safeguards.” But the facts would suggest that the Moms Clean Air Force is shooting at the wrong target. The Moms and other supporters of the big-government status quo regularly point to the EPA’s Clean Air Act of 1970 as the reason our air is cleaner today than it was before the regulations went into effect. But what they don’t want you to know is that “by nearly every standard measure [our air] is much, much, much cleaner today in the United States than 50 and 100 years ago,” according to The Heritage Foundation. [caption id="attachment_1663" align="alignleft" width="300"]



From "Air Quality in America" by the American Enterprise Institute[/caption] And the main reason our air is cleaner—and continues to get cleaner—is that “market forces promoting greater efficiency and technological advancement often had the salutary side effect of reducing the pollution emitted per unit of economic activity,” according to a report by the American Enterprise Institute. “For example,” they wrote, “growing affluence allowed households to switch from coal to cleaner, more efficient natural gas for home heating and cooking. Railroads switched from coal-fired steam locomotives to diesel. … The market forces that caused these transformations were not driven by air quality concerns, but they nevertheless caused large declines in air pollution levels.” The same cannot be said for the EPA. In fact, their regulatory “efficiency” very often causes more problems than it solves. Take the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). This regulatory effort to mandate market changes has proven so ineffective that it has garnered (very rare) bipartisan condemnation. For example, Democratic Congressman Peter Welch said, “The well-intentioned policy has been an overwhelming flop for a diverse group of people and businesses in my state. The negative impact on their livelihoods highlights the desperate need for Congress to reform the RFS.” And Republican Congressman Pete Olson from Texas said, “The mandate has helped to distort the market. In some years, it has been estimated that this costs an extra $2,000 out of the pocket of a family of four.” If the Moms Clean Air Force really wants cleaner air, they should start aiming their sights at harmful government regulations.

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