

For 40 years, the [Clean Air Act](#) has been successful in reducing emissions into the atmosphere of pollutants and chemicals that kill people. Its success is due, in large part, to being enacted and strengthened based on the best science to find the most effective ways to remove the worst pollutants from our air. Unfortunately, because of politics – and not science – the law now is under attack.

Last week, a House panel began efforts to gut the Clean Air Act and to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from doing its job. It was two years ago that the EPA concluded, after a comprehensive review of scientific evidence, that carbon pollution emissions into the air endanger the health and welfare of the American people. EPA scientists should continue to work unimpeded to update air pollution safeguards according to the most-up-to-date evidence not based on ideology.

This a matter of public health and also a matter of economics. The Clean Air Act has spurred technological innovation, driving the creation of new industries and American jobs. The rest of the world is not turning back. Already, other nations are developing clean energy technologies that they are selling back to us. Wouldn't it be better if we developed them here and sold them to the rest of the world instead of someday having to buy them?

Competing in Math and Science

President Obama struck the right note during the State of the Union address when he said we need to recognize not just the winner of the Super Bowl, but also celebrate the winner of the science fair. Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education is so vital to staying competitive in an integrated global economy. Accordingly, with a nod to the Green Bay Packers, I note that once again Central New Jersey has produced one of 40 student finalists in the [Intel Science Talent Search](#)

. Congratulations to Josh Bocarsly for his work in surface chemistry that may have implications for preventing rejection of medical implants.

Recently, I visited The College of New Jersey to see how it is developing the next generation of innovators. The faculty and students at TCNJ understand the challenge and importance of science and math education. At TCNJ, I talked with students who are benefiting from legislation I wrote a few years ago to provide upfront tuition aid – up to \$16,000 – to college students who commit to teaching math or science after graduation. Since 2008, TCNJ students have received \$230,000 from the student aid program I created, including 19 students this year.

TCNJ has also benefited from the PERSIST program, which helps recruit and retain students majoring in biology and chemistry at TCNJ. This program has proven to be very effective, with a 100 percent retention rate. The PERSIST program is supported by a \$600,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

We the People

Recently, I had the opportunity to address teams of students from six New Jersey high schools gathered at the State House in Trenton to compete in the final round of the annual “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution” competition. Sponsored locally by the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University, “We the People” promotes civic understanding and responsibility among high school students. The students discussed a number of interesting concepts, such as “Why did the Founders choose to establish a representative democracy rather than a ‘pure’ or ‘direct’ version of democracy?”, “In what ways, if any, has the Supreme Court acted to protect the political rights of the Constitution? How has it acted to restrict them?”, and “what challenges might face American Constitutional Democracy in the twenty-first century?”

I am pleased to congratulate the students and teachers of East Brunswick High School, led by social studies teacher Alan Brodman, who placed first in the competition and will advance to represent New Jersey in the “We the People” national finals in Washington, D.C., in April. Congratulations, also, to teams from West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North and Marlboro High School, who placed second and fifth, respectively. For more information on the “We the People” program, click [here](#) .