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BLOOMBERG SIGNS CLEAN AIR BILL, LIMITS DANGEROUS POLLUTION

Law will not eliminate all toxins but takes major step forward, reducing harmful emissions.

This afternoon, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed into law a bill that aims to reduce harmful pollutants in New York City's air by restricting the toxic content of certain heating fuels.

An [updated analysis](#) released in the spring found that up to 259 lives per year could be saved by using cleaner fuels in the boilers of the 9000 or so large buildings that currently burn dirty oil. The Institute for Policy Integrity report showed that a transition to less toxic fuel options would reduce the number of New Yorkers suffering fatal heart attacks, chronic bronchitis, and asthma—saving billions of dollars in health benefits.

The legislation the Mayor will sign today does not reach the full potential benefits of a total conversion away from polluting heating fuel, but it takes a significant step forward. The bill cuts the amount of sulfur and soot emitted by one of the dirtiest types of heating oil, known as “#4”, and begins to incorporate renewable fuels into the city's heating oil supply. The act will begin to draw down the concentration of toxins in the city's air—currently at levels that cause health effects similar to inhaling second-hand cigarette smoke.

Jason Schwartz, co-author of [More Residual Risks](#), said, “This bill will deliver major health dividends to the citizens of New York. Heart disease rates will go down, asthma cases will recede and it will literally become easier for New Yorkers to breathe. Though there is room to do more, this legislation lays a strong foundation for cleaner air.”

Policy Integrity's analysis found that phasing out residual oil, lowering the sulfur content of heating oils, and encouraging a switch to cleaner fuels like natural gas, are policies that generate more economic benefits than they cost. Over a thirty-year period, a full conversion from residual oil to natural gas would generate \$22 billion in health benefits and several billion more in financial savings for the city and its residents.

The City Council's clean heating oil bill will not fully realize those savings but sets New York firmly on a path toward doing so.

Schwartz said, “While I hope the City will continue to pursue options for phasing out use of the residual oil altogether, kudos go to the City Council Committee on Environmental Protection, its Chair Jim Gennaro, and

Speaker Christine Quinn for identifying and championing this underreported health issue, as well as to the Mayor for signing the bill today.”

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For coverage of residual oil use in New York, [click here](#).