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CPR's Heinzerling Reacts to Whitman Announcement on Senior Discount

Heinzerling: "John Graham still misunderstands the problem with OMB's 'Senior Discount'; it's a matter of equity, not number-crunching"

Washington, DC ---- Lisa Heinzerling, Vice President of the Center for Progressive Regulation, today reacted to EPA Administrator Christie Whitman's announcement that her agency would no longer employ the controversial "senior discount" in evaluating proposed environmental regulations. The approach, imposed by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs of the Office of Management and Budget, and used in recent cost-benefit analyses, devalues the benefits of health and environmental regulations for people over 70. Heinzerling's remarks follow:

It's good that Governor Whitman has gone on record to say her agency will no longer use the "senior discount." It is, has been, and always will be bad science and bad policy-making. Unfortunately, John Graham seems unwilling to make a similar, straightforward commitment, and because of the authority he has over the regulatory process, it's unlikely we've heard the last of this.

In the end, the real purpose of this regulatory approach is to chip away at environmental, health and safety regulations. Mr. Graham provides statistical cover for what is at core an effort to roll back important protections. To this day, Mr. Graham still apparently does not appreciate that the problem with the discount is not a question of science or statistics, but one of basic inequality. This is a matter of inequity, not number-crunching.

Lisa Heinzerling is a tenured professor at Georgetown University Law Center. The Center for Progressive Regulation is a nonprofit research and educational organization of university-affiliated academics with expertise in the legal, economic, and scientific issues related to regulation of health, safety, and the environment. For more information on CPR or its work on this or other issues, or to arrange interviews with CPR scholars, contact Matthew Freeman at 301-762-8980. CPR is on the web at www.progressiveregulation.org.

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