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Issue:

The increasing problem of air pollution in New Jersey

Necessary Background:

Air pollution is the release of biological hazards and other harmful materials into the atmosphere, causing detrimental consequences to the environment. Chemicals such as carbon monoxide and sulfur oxides are released into the air through car emission, factories, and several other sources [3].

Evidence of Problem Existing:

New Jersey's concentration of ground-level ozone (when pollution causes ozone to drop to the Earth's surface, creating a major health hazard) has increased over the past five years, from exceeding federal standards nine days in 2009 to over 50 in 2014 [1]. Currently, New Jersey ranks as the 49th state with the cleanest air in America. Even more disturbing, the American Lung Association reports that 60% of New Jersey citizens live in areas with potentially harmful air quality [2]. Furthermore, our influx of air pollution is directly correlated to health problems and an excess of acid rain [2].

Impact:

According to the World Health Organization, air pollution caused the deaths of 7 million in 2012 [4]. Air pollutants cause damage to the lungs and the respiratory system, making it more difficult for humans to breathe properly. Some other side effects of air pollution include heart disease, lung cancer, asthma, and stroke [4]. If a solution is not found quickly, New Jersey cities have the potential to soon be unsafe to inhabit [1]. Statewide, New Jersey accounts for 2.1 million pounds of air pollutants, and although this number is a 1% decrease than what it was last year, citizens in major cities and North Jersey are still dangerously affected [1].

Possible Solutions:

In order to fix the problem, there are essentially two main areas that we need to combat: pollution from industrial plants and pollution from automobile emission. Regarding the former, a major step would be to institute a cap-and-trade policy in New Jersey. A cap-and-trade system is a regulatory system that is meant to reduce certain kinds of emissions and pollution and to provide companies with a profit incentive to reduce their pollution levels faster than their peers. In order to counter the effects of cars releasing harmful chemicals into the environment, the government could incentivize the production and purchase of zero emission vehicles such as electric cars.

Sources:

1. <http://www.northjersey.com/news/business/toxic-air-emissions-in-north-jersey-in-holding-pattern-1.1431239>
2. <http://www.nj.gov/dep/daq/>
3. [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/04/nj\\_has\\_improved\\_air\\_quality\\_in.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/04/nj_has_improved_air_quality_in.html)
4. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/air-pollution/en/>