

I'm looking forward to hearing Scripps climate scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan speak at an event next week in Los Angeles, and I hope he'll talk about black carbon, which many are calling the low-hanging fruit of the climate change problem. Black carbon is the fine black soot that's generated by carbon combustion, these days mostly from traditional cookstoves and other sources in the developing world. (Its serious health effects have led many developed nations to control it as a traditional air pollutant, as through the Clean Air Act particulate matter regs in the US). It was a largely-ignored cause of climate change until the last couple of years, but is now thought to be the #2 contributor, behind CO₂ but ahead of other widely-known greenhouse gasses, like methane. As best this lawyer can understand it, BC warms the earth because it's very dark, thus absorbing warmth and failing to reflect sunlight — like an anti-glacier.

Black carbon is getting more and higher-profile attention as a target for climate regulation these days, and for good reason. Sec. of State Hillary Clinton specifically mentioned BC last week in her remarks to the landmark joint session of Arctic Council and Antarctic Treaty members. The NY Times has a good article on the black carbon problem [here](#), including quotes from Ramanathan and a profile of some of his efforts to reduce black carbon in India by replacing traditional stoves there with cleaner, solar-powered ones. All note that controlling sources of BC seems like a relatively easy and effective step we can and should take now, while we work out the complexities of reducing CO₂ emissions. We've shown how to do it in the developed world and have lots of regulatory and technological experience to share. Because BC persists in the atmosphere for just a couple of weeks, not decades, reductions now will result in near-immediate climate gains. And controlling BC has public health benefits that would likely justify these steps even in the absence of climate change rationales.

Three weeks ago, Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.) introduced a [bill](#) to reduce black carbon by 1) requiring a black carbon assessment and abatement report by the EPA within a year of enactment; 2) requiring final black carbon regulations by the EPA within two years of enactment; and 3) mandating that the State Department, the EPA, and other agencies seek to reduce black carbon pollution internationally through foreign assistance and the growth of US clean technologies abroad. Anyone hear anything good about the bill's chances?