Cover Story

■ Q&A

The Re-evaluator

Chemical engineer Lisa Jackson has spent much of her first eight months as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency reviewing Bush-era decisions.

■ **By Margaret Kriz Hobson**

In late January, shortly after Lisa Jackson was sworn in as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, President Obama directed her to take a second look at his predecessor's decision to block California's efforts to regulate global-warming pollution from cars. In September, Jackson, together with Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, reversed the Bush administration's ruling.

Jackson, a Princeton-educated chemical engineer, has spent much of her first eight months on the job re-evaluating Bush policies. She is also using her position to push for greater diversity in the voices that are heard in environmental policy debates. "We have to get someone who sits in an urban setting or who is really concerned about school conditions to see themselves as caring about environmental issues," Jackson, the agency's first African-American administrator, told *National Journal*. "For us to have a vibrant and strong movement for the environment into the future, it means building again the broad coalition that got us the EPA to start with." Edited excerpts from *NJ*'s September 21 interview with Jackson follow.

■ NJ: Why are you reviewing and reversing many of the Bush administration's environmental policies?

■ Jackson: President Obama came in and made it clear that he wants to revitalize national environmental policy and EPA's role in being active in promoting human health and the environment. So we have called for review in those cases where we believe that a regulation or standard didn't necessarily follow sound science. I think that it is extremely important [for people to believe that they] can trust EPA, that sound science is something that we will adhere to.

■ NJ: Would it be difficult to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act rather than through a new law?

■ Jackson: There are two tracks here. There has always been the idea of new legislation specifically designed and put together to address carbon dioxide and greenhouse-gas pollution. The belief is based on the idea—and I subscribe to it—that it's better to be market-based. That will provide an incentive, a clear signal, on the price for carbon, and therefore the markets will react. And I agree with all of that. I think legislation is the best way to do that.

But I think regulation does the same thing. Any regulatory program also imposes a cost. And industry looks at it and says, "OK, so now we have these new regulations to comply with. How best can we do that?" I believe there are some very good, measured things that can happen with respect to greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act that are entirely consistent with what I hope will ultimately be climate legislation.

■ NJ: The Clean Air Act directs EPA to regulate companies that emit at least 250 tons of a hazardous chemical. If you regulate greenhouse gases under the law, do you risk being forced to regulate a lot of small businesses?

■ Jackson: I've said over and over that that would not be a satisfactory outcome. If that were the case, then I would agree that it is not the way to regulate smartly. I believe there are things that we can do in terms of the regulatory environment to preclude that outcome.

■ NJ: The administration recently released draft reports aimed at restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Do you plan to adopt regulations to reach that goal?

■ Jackson: There's an ongoing need to force some rigor into the system. But the decisions are tough. EPA recognizes and embraces its fundamental role of sometimes having to be the watchdog to ensure that we don't move away from the tough decisions.

The Chesapeake Bay allows us to use it as a laboratory. I hope that what we learn from some of the things that we try on the bay will be lessons that we can use one way or the other in terms of national policy. The EPA's draft report on the bay got lots of attention because it specifically talked about the opportunities to consider new regulations [targeting such issues as] storm-water runoff from development and enforcement of the existing [industrial animal facility] regulations—and an understanding that we probably need additional regulations even there. So it's both. It's [about the regulations] that you now have on the books and about operations that aren't currently regulated. ■

LIZ LYNCH

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—Lisa Jackson

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