Name: Eni Owoeye

Title: The scope of policy responses to new sulfur pollution abatement technology for vessels traveling within U.S waters

Abstract:

The United States' influential maritime heritage began in the country's early colonial period. Fine particulate matter, sulfur oxides (SOx), and nitrogen oxides emitted from ship smokestacks lead to premature mortality and morbidity effects. To protect public and ecological health in marine and coastal regions, the shipping and cruise industries are pressured through new regulations and technologies to achieve more sustainable vessels. Exhaust gas cleaning systems, or scrubbers, are one way the industry can address air pollution and comply with the current International Maritime Organization (IMO) SOx regulations in marine fuel exhaust. But scrubbers are not the solution they seem: scrubber discharge produced after treatment can pose a water quality issue due to the high concentrations of heavy metals, PAHs, and other toxic substances. Here I examine the federal policy framework to regulate and enforce discharge standards, with case studies of states with and without scrubber bans. This comparison between the national and statewide responses demonstrates California and Connecticut's preemptive action against detrimental effects scrubbers cause through their discharge, while Florida and Texas display the potential disproportionate harm done if scrubber discharge procedures remain unchecked. Other major players, such as the Port of New York/New Jersey, are adopting separate environmental regulations to address their air pollution concerns. The tradeoffs widespread scrubber discharge has on environmental and public health considerations should warrant concern for U.S. waters. Scrubbers do not go far enough and should therefore not distract the industry from investing in more sustainable mitigation strategies.