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STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BARBARA FLYNN CURRIE
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

300 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706
217/782-8121

25TH REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT
EX OFFICIO MEMBER
ALL HOUSE COMMITTEES

19 April 2006

Mr. Nicholas J. Melas
1555 N. Astor, # 225E
Chicago IL 60610

PC#44

*REGARDING: IEPA's Proposed Mercury Emissions Reduction Rule
(PCB Case No: R2006-025)*

Dear Mr. Melas:

I write to urge your support of the efforts of Governor Blagojevich and the Illinois EPA to reduce coal-fired power plant mercury emissions by ninety percent by mid-year 2009. If the proposed mercury rule becomes law, it will benefit my citizens and for all Illinoisans.

The health hazards of mercury are well known: mercury is a potent toxin that puts developing fetuses and children at risk of developmental delays, decreased IQ, and memory and attention difficulties. Higher doses also impair adults and increase the risk of heart attacks. Humans get most of their mercury from eating fish— and mercury already contaminates fish in every body of water in Illinois.

A report released today by Illinois Public Interest Research Group shows that several of Chicago's park lagoons contain some of the most mercury contaminated fish in Illinois. The lagoon at Sherman Park, only a few miles from my district, was the site of the single highest fish mercury concentration ever found in Illinois. And the state's testing in Lake Michigan has found dangerously high mercury levels in such popular sport fishing species as bass, trout, and coho and Chinook salmon. The mercury in these fish endangers everyone, but it does disproportionate harm to people in our communities for whom the lake and park lagoons are an important part of daily life: the recreational anglers, commercial and subsistence fishermen, charter boat operators and their clients, Illinoisans who buy local fish at the market, and all of their families.

Fortunately, despite the seriousness of the mercury problem, the proposed rule is a solution we can implement now. The twenty-one coal-fired power plants in Illinois are the single largest source of in-state mercury emissions. Currently available technologies can capture 90% of this mercury before it leaves the stack. Recent IEPA modeling predicts the increased cost to the average Illinois ratepayer would be less than \$1.50 per month.

The Illinois mercury rule is a response to the federal EPA's weak, industry-drafted mercury rules that won't address local hotspots of pollution and will delay meaningful mercury reductions for at least a decade, putting another generation of developing children and the health of Lake Michigan at risk. Three states have already gone beyond the federal rule. We should adopt the IEPA proposal to do the same in Illinois.

Of particular concern to me are recent findings that power plant mercury disproportionately impacts people living near the plants. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration researchers found, for example, that 48 percent of the mercury deposited in Lake Michigan came from sources within 60 miles of the lake. Moreover, sixteen of the twenty-five top sources of mercury deposited into the lake were coal-fired power plants. I urge you to resist a weakening of the rule that would allow individual plants to install less than the best available controls or achieve significantly less than 90 percent reductions.

For the sake of families that want a healthy environment for their children, and on behalf of the citizens I represent living near contaminated waters, I ask you to approve of a strong Illinois mercury reduction rule.

Sincerely,



Barbara Flynn Currie
House Majority Leader

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