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General Assembly
State of Illinois
Dale A. Righter
Deputy Republican Leader
State Senator • 55th District

RECEIVED
CLERK'S OFFICE
MAY 25 2012
STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

May 22, 2012

Illinois Pollution Control Board
Mr. John Therriault, Clerk of the Board
James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph Street – Ste. 11-500
Chicago, IL 60601

PCB 4

RE: Public Comment in Support of granting Ameren Newton Energy Center petition for variance, Docket Number 2012-126 (Air Variance)

This correspondence is on behalf of the written petition from Ameren Energy Resources (AER) requesting a variance with the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) granting the facility additional time to fully construct and implement the updated scrubber equipment at the Newton Energy Center.

As the State Senator for the 55th District, I know the disastrous economic impact that would follow if the single largest private employer in Jasper County were closed.

The Ameren Newton facility pays the bulk of the property taxes in Jasper County which totaled over \$7.4 million in 2010. The county wide school system, which benefits the most from this tax revenue, had a high school enrollment over 950 in the mid-seventies when this power plant was being built. Today it is under 450 students.

Our economic development and area elected officials are constantly working to recruit and attract businesses to come to Jasper County but are hampered by high workers comp rates and the overall business climate here in Illinois. While their hard work has surfaced many leads, Jasper County has only been successful in securing a few new jobs. They basically have treaded water and needless to say, loosing these 155 high paying jobs would crush Jasper County's economy.

It is also my understanding that surrounding states do not currently mandate the stringent pollution control requirements that Illinois is trying to impose on coal fired plants. It is also my understanding that federal rules were to be implemented that would mirror the new Illinois regulations but as of today, those rules are still not in place.

We all believe in clean air and protecting our natural resources but with the current electric demand and prices well below normal, now is probably not the time to fully implement these higher pollution control standards.

The Newton plant has already invested millions of dollars toward their necessary improvements to become compliant. In addition AER is not asking the board to relieve it of its obligation to install the remaining equipment. They just need additional time and resources to complete the project and I feel they are doing their very best to meet their environmental obligations under these very trying circumstances.

I ask the Board to please give through consideration to their request and to give careful thought to the devastating impact the closure of this facility would have on Jasper County and the surrounding area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale A. Righter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Dale A. Righter
State Senator
55th District

DAR/jg