

June 30, 2010

Governor Pat Quinn
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
Pollution Control Board

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Dear Governor Pat Quinn,

In Micah 6:8 we are called to "Love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with God." This fundamental call to do justice applies not only to our love for our neighbor, but also applies to our biblical call to care for God's creation. As faithful people, we strive to live in a way that our daily actions and choices reflect our values and ethics. Values and ethics form the cornerstone of good leadership; good leadership should in turn lead to the betterment of all members of society.

Today, our Christian ethics and values compel us to write to you out of concern for the communities in Illinois and across the country who are being contaminated by toxic coal ash.

Coal ash threatens our communities with poisoned drinking water, contaminated streams and harmful air emissions. Communities, especially children, living near the 21 coal ash disposal sites in Illinois, among the 585 known disposal sites across the nation, are facing an increased risk of cancer, learning disabilities, birth defects and other illnesses due to heavy metals – such as arsenic, lead and mercury – that seep into drinking water. Yet for decades, the coal industry has been allowed to dump coal ash without any federal regulations and little to no state regulation. The coal industry and individual coal-fired power plants have the means to properly dispose of this toxic by-product. Expecting the coal industry to be a good neighbor - one that does no harm to fellow neighbors - is not outrageous. This modest and common sense expectation should simply be considered part of a reasonable cost of doing business.

The current system of dumping coal ash is not acceptable. Coal ash is damaging God's good creation and the health and livelihood of our neighbors. The effects of coal ash on human health and the environment threaten and degrade life. We have been gifted the unique ability to love and serve creation and fellow human beings as God calls us to do. Together we can fulfill that unique ability by protecting families and the environment from the impacts of coal ash. This is a national problem – and a national solution is needed. Federally enforceable safeguards are the only way to guarantee the public will be safe from the dangers of toxic coal ash.

The Environmental Protection Agency released two proposals that would put in place the first federal regulations around coal ash. We are hopeful that you will provide clear and ethical leadership on this and stand up for strict regulation of hazardous coal ash. Please encourage the EPA to take strong action to appropriately deal with hazardous coal waste.

Sincerely,

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