

Senator Connie Williams

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

Department of Environmental Protection

Mercury Hearing

Thursday, July 27 – 1 p.m.

Norristown DEP Regional Office

- The health of Pennsylvanians and the future of the Commonwealth's environment is at a critical juncture and it is incumbent upon the legislature and the administration to support a solid environmental policy and stand strong against some business interests that are seeking a much less significant reduction in mercury emissions that will trade emissions credits instead of seeking a real reduction in mercury emissions.
- The current debate over mercury standards began in 2004 when a number of environmental, sporting, religious, health, women's rights and public interest organizations statewide petitioned the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to regulate mercury emissions, asking for a 90 percent reduction in mercury pollution from power plants.
- I give Secretary McGinty and the mercury workgroup credit for moving this issue forward in a timely and thoughtful manner. They should be commended for their hard work and dedication.
- Countless advocates and opponents have visited my office to share their views.

- This spring, there were several legislative attempts (S.B. 1201 and H.B. 2610) to block DEP mercury regulations and move Pennsylvania toward adopting the weaker federal standards.
- In response to the Senate version of the bill to adopt federal standards, Clean Water Action brought forward a letter from 45 Pennsylvania health care professionals who opposed efforts to derails DEP's rule.
- Additionally, over 100 organizations around the state have endorsed DEP's proposed mercury rule.
- I was disappointed that the Senate did vote on SB 1201, but I was pleased that I was joined by nine other Senators in opposing the bill, and that the House didn't attempt to advance the measure.
- Since 2004, I have heard from hundreds of constituents who support a strong state-specific regulation to reduce mercury emissions.
- And other Pennsylvanians share the same belief – a poll conducted this spring indicated that 80 percent of Pennsylvanians prefer state regulation to the federal rule.

- Given the number of letters, e-mails and phone calls my offices have received, I'd have to say that support in the 17<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District is closer to 100 percent.
- I share their concerns for the health of Pennsylvania's children and waterways.
- Pennsylvania's power plants currently have the second highest mercury emissions in the country.
- The emission of this toxic chemical can and should be dramatically reduced.
- Pennsylvania's electric generating industry must rise to the challenge of cleaning up its power plants that contaminate rivers and lakes.
- We may not be able to control mercury that enters Pennsylvania's waterways from other states or from other sources, but their existence should not deter us from rising to the occasion and serving as an example that good environmental policy and economic advancement can go hand in hand.

- I offer my support for DEP's plan and urge everyone to consider the ramifications of emissions credit trading, which most likely will lead to hotspots of mercury in communities near coal burning plants.
- Pennsylvania has a solid and strong plan to reduce mercury emissions that will offer a 90 percent reduction by 2015, while the federal plan offers credit trading that may lead to only a 70 percent reduction and that goal won't be reached until 2030.
- This issue seems pretty clear cut – The only real choice that will protect the health of Pennsylvanians and our environment is the state plan.
- And as I said at the opening of my testimony today, the health of Pennsylvanians and the future of the Commonwealth's environment is at a critical juncture.
- It is incumbent upon the legislature and the administration to support a solid environmental policy and stand strong against the business interests that are seeking a much less significant reduction in mercury emissions.