

Statement of William C. Thwing, 206 Maplebrook Road, Ebensburg, PA 15931, (814) 472-8545 at the Public Hearings on the Pennsylvania Mercury Pollution Rule on July 25 2006 in Pittsburgh, PA

My name is William Thwing, I live in Ebensburg , PA where I Pastor 2 churches. I have 4 children 3 of who live in PA and all of whom are of child bearing age. For the sake of my children and their children... yet unborn; For the sake of sake of the 200 plus families I Pastor; For the sake of all the families of Ebensburg and the Johnstown-Altoona area; For the sake of all the young people who plan to have children in Pennsylvania; and even for the sake of the 600,000 American babies born each year whose mothers have already been identified by the US Center for Disease Control as having dangerous levels of mercury in their blood. ...**I strongly support the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protections proposed rulemaking on the "Standards for the Contaminant Mercury" which would amend chapter 123 of the Pennsylvania Code.**

Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin which causes severe developmental problems in developing fetuses and babies. It is proven to cause retardation and autism among other crippling diseases in humans... and to cause all kinds of weird developmental problems in a wide variety of wildlife including birds, mammals, amphibians and the native freshwater and saltwater fish Pennsylvanians eat. After Texas, Pennsylvania pumps more mercury contaminants into the air and water than any other state in the union. This poison pill is delivered primarily by our 36 coal-fired electric power plants which dot the landscape of Pennsylvania. At least seventy-five percent(75%) of the 5 tons of the neurotoxin mercury dumped yearly into our air and water comes directly from these plants. Ebensburg and the Johnstown-Altoona area where I live is directly down-wind from many of these coal burning plants and according to a recent study by Penn State University, we get 47% more mercury dumped on us than other less vulnerable parts of the state like Wellsboro. That means that all unborn children in the most populous areas of Pennsylvania but particularly our children in the Johnstown-Altoona area have a much greater chance of having learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, decreased IQ especially in the areas of special relations and language than do children in many other parts of the United States...and in more severe cases being born blind, deaf, subject to seizures, having heart or cardiovascular problems, being severely retarded or autistic All of these developmental problems in the human fetus, younger children and even in adults have been linked to the neurotoxin Mercury in studies conducted in the past three years. These studies include: Hightower and Moore (2003), KR Maheffey (2005) S.E. Schober (2003), Transende, Landrigan and Schechter (2005), EM Yokoo (2003), AH Stern (2005 and E. Groth (2005) to mention a few. The children and the families of

Pennsylvanians are at extreme and unnecessary risk because of this mercury neurotoxin.

This problem has a simple, quick and relatively inexpensive solution. Mercury pollution controls are available and affordable for these coal-burning power plants. The so-called "Federal Clean Air Mercury Rule" which these plants invoke as holding the solution to Pennsylvania's mercury problem... is a joke – a bad joke on the citizens of Pennsylvania at best. I would describe it rather as a hoax, a delaying tactic by big ruthless, greedy corporations ...because it allows these already highly profitable coal-burning power plants who have long since paid off their capitol costs and are now just rolling in profitability... to do "mercury pollution trading" - the "market based cap & trade system" proposed by the EPA...to purchase credits which exempt them from the federal controls and allow them to continue pumping obscene and scandalous amounts of mercury into our Pennsylvania air ...way into the future. A so-called reduction in mercury emissions of maybe...possibly as much as ... 70% by 2030. This may be OK for North Dakota or Arizona which doesn't have a problem. But for the # 2 mercury polluter in the country and especially for the people down wind from these big polluters like the Keystone plant which produces 1735 pounds of mercury per year and is the 5th worst polluter in the country or the Homer City Plant which is right next door to us and produces 688 pounds of mercury/year. Ridiculous!! Absurd!! Pennsylvania Power plants are currently the largest purchasers of pollution allowances in the country. If they are given an opportunity to participate in the cap and trade system and the cap and trade system costs them less in the short run than doing what is right by the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania must adopt it's own mercury standard which if properly enforced will result in an estimated 90% reduction in mercury emissions by 2015. There have been studies done in Massachusetts and in Florida the kind of dramatic turn-around that can be achieved in a very short time if substantive controls are adopted. Massachusetts reduced mercury levels by 32% in their fresh water fish within 7 years after the new standard was implemented. Florida reduced mercury levels in the fish and wading birds of the Everglades by 60 – 70 % in an equally short time. **Pennsylvania can do it too...If we choose to.**

If our already highly profitable, coal burning plants in Pennsylvania were to install these simple cost effective technologies tomorrow and pass all their costs on to their customers, the financial burden of the average customer would amount to only \$13.00 extra per year. A National Wildlife Federation study estimated that it would cost each customer exactly \$1.08 per month to rid ourselves of this peril. That is a very small cost... to protect Pennsylvania's citizens from a high incidence

of retarded and autistic children that require a whole life time of care for their families who could instead be living normal productive lives.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this one out ...It's a no-brainer...no matter how many high priced mouthpieces the coal-burning electric power industry sends out to confuse us. In the end, if Pennsylvanians adopt this standard,...everybody wins – generations of yet unborn Pennsylvania children and their families, fishermen like myself who like to eat what they catch occasionally and even the Pennsylvania coal industry which produces some of the best cleanest burning coal in the country. You don't have to import junk coal from Wyoming just because it's cheaper. I would urge DEP and the government of Pennsylvania to build the Pennsylvania economy by adopting this home grown mercury contaminant standard.

My wife says that I have to tell at least one story. As a minister, I see a lot of parts of the community that most people don't ever see. I was the Salvation Army voucher writer in my area for three years. Hundreds of desperate disabled people came through my office during those years. In many cases I got the opportunity to visit in their homes to assess their situation. Many of them had problem children with anger issues, attention disorders, school problems. Some of these people were parts of dysfunctional multigenerational extended families with developmental disabilities. These families are huge drains on the economy of Pennsylvania. In more than one case, these families lived not only off the state but also off the land. They hunted and fished and gardened and canned for their food. Occasionally because they had nothing else to give me, they would go into the freezer before I left and offer me a frozen squirrel or a frozen fish as a token of their appreciation. For many of these people the "2 fish meals per month fish & game commission rule" doesn't count, because when you are hungry you eat what you have around. Pennsylvania has thousands of these folks who mostly operate below the radar of the social system. I call it the underbelly of Pennsylvania. Not every state has this underbelly.

If by enacting this mercury rule in Pennsylvania, we even in part, solved this rural poverty and rural dysfunctionality problem we have. It would be worth every penny we spent. Please adopt the mercury standard for the sake of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians. Thank you