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Statement from Loree Speedy for July 25, 2006 Public Hearing on DEP's Proposed Mercury Rule

The field of environmental health progresses in its efforts to measure the effects of environmental pollutants. When solid scientific research demonstrates that a pollutant is in fact detrimental to our health, we cannot deny that – today we now know more of what pollution from burning coal can do to our health and to our natural world. We cannot afford to rejoice when told that certain pollutants from burning coal are declining when new research demonstrates that the existing pollutants, though present in smaller amounts, continue to be responsible for the death and harm of humans. We must accept that coal is still “dirty,” and do all that is possible to reduce coal’s far-reaching impacts on health and environment.

If the DEP’s mercury reduction rule does significantly harm the coal industry while protecting human health, we must accept that a shift from an energy technology that is inherently polluting to one that is harmless and efficient is greatly needed. We must encourage our researchers to develop cleaner, less-polluting energy technologies, whether those be advances in the greening of coal, or methane extraction, the development of mercury-specific control technologies, or the development of new alternative energy sources like solar or wind. The Federal mercury rule will not encourage such innovation. The DEP rule has the ability to move us forward faster to a sustainable energy future with greatly reduced health risks and environmental impacts.

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