

VALDOSTA LOWNDES COUNTY BRANCH
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

P.O. Box 1324 • Valdosta, Georgia 31603

September 23, 2010

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
Members of the U.S. Senate
President Barack Obama

Members of the U.S. Congress and President Barack Obama,

In response to a study showing that air pollution doubled black infant mortality in Florida, Dr. Edward Holifield asked, "How high does black infant mortality have to get in Gadsden County, Florida before people are concerned?"

Despite toxins spewing from incinerators situated in communities of color and poor communities which cause disease and premature deaths, the United States Congress is increasing billions of dollars of subsidies and cash handouts for construction of hundreds of new tree and garbage incinerators all across America. What is incredible is that Congress is doling out money and tax credits because these filthy biomass electric generating incinerators are being falsely labeled as clean, green energy.

Moreover, this week, Senator Bingaman unveiled S. 3813, a Renewable Electricity Standard that provides incentives to build more incinerators that burn garbage and trees for electricity.

I am the President of the Valdosta-Lowndes branch of the NAACP. We live in a county of about 100,000 citizens. Our local County Commission and Industrial Authority invited a group called Wiregrass Power, LLC, owned by Sterling Planet, to build a biomass incinerator here.

The incinerator is sited within 2 miles of 2 predominantly black elementary schools, 7 large black churches, a predominantly black assisted living facility which serves over 60 families, 2 predominantly black Head Start programs, two huge apartment complexes that are predominantly black, and Valdosta's most upscale black residential community.

The NAACP has long recognized that people of color are disproportionately affected by pollution, and opposes environmental racism. Here is our national position statement on Health and Environmental Justice:

http://backup.naacp.org/about/resources/brochures/health_resolutions-04.pdf

The Valdosta-Lowndes NAACP passed a resolution that the siting of the Valdosta, Georgia, biomass incinerator is a clear-cut example of environmental racism.

"Keeping The Fight For Freedom Alive For Today & Beyond"

I invite you to look at the opposition to a similar biomass incinerator in Leon County, Florida, in which the NAACP alleged civil rights violations and racial discrimination because it was sited in a predominantly black community:

<http://www.allbusiness.com/government/government-bodies-offices/12191597-1.html>

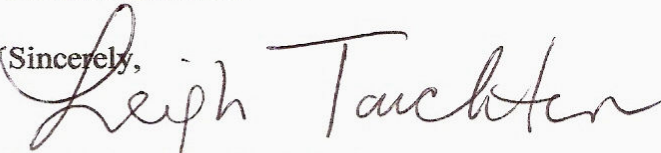
The Leon County, Florida, incinerator was blocked and the company moved over to Port St. Joe, Florida, where residents organized to oppose it for a variety of the same reasons we oppose it here. <http://gretnaflorida.biomess.us/page/2/>

According to the American Lung Association, "Burning biomass could lead to significant increases in emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide and have severe impacts on the health of children, older adults, and people with lung diseases."

According to the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, "Biomass burning of poultry litter and wood wastes creates emissions of particulate matter that research has shown increase the risk of premature death, asthma, chronic bronchitis, and heart disease"

According to the Massachusetts Medical Society, "The burning of biomass releases small particles into the air creating particulate air pollution. Particulate air pollution is associated with increased cardiopulmonary symptoms, asthma attacks, days lost from work due to respiratory disease, emergency room visits, hospitalization rates, and mortality. The diesel vehicles which would harvest and transport the biomass for the plants would create additional emissions, including carbon dioxides, nitrogen oxides, and diesel particulate matter, which is especially toxic."

In answer to Dr. Edward Holifield's question "How high does black infant mortality have to get in Gadsden County, Florida before people are concerned", I hope that Congress and the Obama administration will answer "right now", starting with 1) an end to labeling dirty biomass incinerator energy as clean, green, or renewable, 2) an end to all tax credits, subsidies and cash handouts to biomass incinerators, 3) by passing a Renewable Electricity Standard only if it excludes the generation of electricity by burning "biomass" or municipal solid waste and 4) by upholding the right and obligation of the EPA to ensure that there is pure, clean, clear air in communities of color, poor communities, and for all Americans.

Sincerely,


Leigh Touchton, President
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