



Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee

Senator Mary Jo White
Chairman

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Letters to the Editor
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
34 Boulevard of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Dear Editor:

DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty's recent letter ("Mercury Pollution will make our state uncompetitive") is simply outrageous.

The Secretary has testified twice before my committee. She was recalled June 6th because several members, including myself, had concerns that earlier testimony was untruthful – specifically regarding her efforts to discredit coal operators and representatives of the United Mine Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

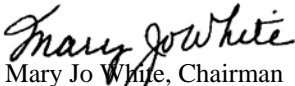
Ms. McGinty alleges that under my bill and similar legislation in the House – sponsored by over 125 legislators including all Democratic and Republican floor leaders – we will not see any mercury reductions in Pennsylvania. The facts speak otherwise. Since 1999, pollution controls installed at power plants in Pennsylvania have reduced emissions by 33%. Moreover, DEP's own data indicates that by 2015, 90% of the generating capacity in Pennsylvania will have installed pollution controls to reduce mercury. The insinuation that we will simply trade our way into compliance is not supported by the facts.

DEP's handling of the mercury issue has been the most intellectually dishonest exercise I have seen in my time as chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. McGinty is playing politics with public policy, engaging in fear mongering that should embarrass any public official. We ought to ask why McGinty wants us to lose jobs, raise energy prices and reduce our generating capacity for no added health benefit.

As to mercury in vaccines – which is totally unrelated to methylmercury coming from power plants – perhaps Secretary McGinty should have stayed to listen to the rest of our hearing. She would have heard Dr. Calvin Johnson, Governor Rendell's Secretary of Health and a board-certified pediatrician, testify that with the exception of influenza vaccines, none of the routinely recommended childhood vaccines contains thimerosal – the preservative thought to pose a health risk to children, and that under established guidelines, no child will receive excessive mercury from vaccines.

It's ironic that McGinty says I am trying to stop the public process. To the contrary, I have chaired three extensive and balanced public hearings on this issue. My bill does not go forward unless other legislators are persuaded. Contrast that to a regulatory process of one, where only a non-elected Secretary has final word on a mercury rule. My colleagues and I are committed to reducing mercury emissions and protecting the public's health. We have our own families, after all.

Sincerely,


Mary Jo White, Chairman
Senate Environmental Resources
& Energy Committee