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**KENTUCKIANS TESTIFY IN FAVOR OF PROTECTIVE AIR TOXICS
STANDARDS FOR COAL POWER PLANTS**

More than a dozen Kentuckians from all over the state of Kentucky testified to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Atlanta today, asking the agency to enact more protective standards for mercury and air toxics emissions from power plants, under the Clean Air Act.

The EPA's proposed mercury and air toxics standards would reduce by more than 90% the levels of mercury emitted from facilities, an act which would result in hundreds of thousands of avoided cases of chronic health problems.

Mercury is a neurotoxic chemical, exposure of which is linked to learning and developmental disabilities like autism. The most vulnerable population to harm from mercury are infants; the placental barrier cannot prevent exposure to mercury from a pregnant woman.

Cassandra Hobert, from Menifee County, an intern with the Kentucky Environmental Foundation made the trip to Atlanta with an earnest plea. "I am having my first baby girl in August and having grown up in a coal state with some of the highest levels of mercury emissions in the nation, I can't help but wonder if my baby girl will have birth defects or developmental delays due to the neurotoxin running through my veins and her umbilical cord that I *never* gave permission to be put in my body."

Two residents from Louisville's Riverside Gardens community also testified, citing the chronic diseases in their community which they believe are the result of a cocktail of toxic chemicals from nearby manufacturing facilities, power plants and the Cane Run power plant and coal ash landfill. They implored EPA to take action to limit pollution because, they said, Kentucky regulators are not.

"I am here because I want you all to know that we are paying a disproportionately higher price for 'cheap electricity' with our health and our lives," said Kathy Little of Riverside Gardens. "Remember my granddaughter Bryanna, who deserves to live and be healthy just like all those of us who live in the shadows of polluting power plants."

Many people testifying at the hearing today talked about their family traditions of fishing in Kentucky's lakes and rivers. Kentucky is one of more than 20 states with a statewide mercury fish consumption advisory. Shawn Hutchins, a student from

Bardstown said, "I am here to speak for the many fishermen in my family, and for my severely autistic brother. Mercury is in our water and our air, and sacrificing public safety and health for corporate profits is unacceptable. These proposed regulations will make us all healthier and safer."

Utility representatives from Southern Company, Georgia Power and others argued that they need more time to comply with the 3-year timeframe for the proposed mercury standards, an argument with little basis according to Elizabeth Crowe, Director of the Kentucky Environmental Foundation. "Where have the utility companies been for the past decades, when medical and scientific researchers have been studying the effects of heavy metals and toxic pollution on our health?" Crowe said in her comments to EPA. "We don't need more excuses from the polluting industries. We need clean air and clean water now."

Student Natalie Crone said she hopes more Kentuckians will be inspired to speak out in favor of clean air. "I'm concerned that too many people in our country have fallen into a false sense of security; who are under the impression that our government will act in the best interest and wellbeing of those who they serve and not just be concerned with protecting corporate pocketbooks. How dare polluting industries let toxic poisons be released into our water, food, and air. It is time for the EPA to protect its people by regulating these mercury and toxic emissions."

The EPA will accept written comments for the mercury and air toxics standard through July 5, 2011. Information on how to comment can be found at the EPA's website, <http://www.epa.gov>

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