



TESTIMONY

EPA Hearing on Air Toxics Rule - Chicago, IL May 24, 2011
Laura Kratz, LWWIL Issues Specialist - Air Quality and Energy

Good afternoon. I am Laura Kratz, Specialist on Air Quality and Energy Issues with the League of Women Voters of Illinois. Several other League leaders are here in the room and together we are here to voice our strong support for implementation of the Air Toxics Rule.

As you may know, for over 90 years, the League of Women Voters has promoted the active and informed participation of citizens in all levels of government. This goes well beyond simply showing up at the polls on election day.

Our organization conducts independent, in-depth studies on a vast array of public policy matters that include our representative government, education, health care, social services, criminal justice, and natural resources. Not only do we stay current on those issues, we fully understand the interrelationships between them. Because we are known for well-informed, non-partisan advocacy, we are regularly called upon to share our expertise with other groups, testify before governmental agencies, and to work on policy task forces such as the Illinois Smart Grid Collaborative.

That is why we are here today: Since our national study on air pollution in the early 1970s, the League has actively supported federal air pollution controls on industrial production, governmental installations, fuels and vehicles. Furthermore, League members helped pass the landmark Clean Water Act in the early 1970s and to worked to protect, expand and strengthen it through the 1990s and we continue to do so in this century.

The materials the EPA provided in advance of this hearing do an excellent job laying out the health dangers associated with the toxics that are to be regulated once this rule is implemented. Mercury ingestion is a particular concern whether it is part of the air we breathe or in fish we eat from our local waters.

The failure of some power plants to act on their own to keep mercury and other toxic pollutants out of our air and water must be addressed now.

Some industry officials are claiming that it is too expensive to change their methods of operation for the sake of cleaner air. But their failure to change results in high costs for others as families struggle to provide care and comfort to afflicted loved ones, health care systems are called upon to treat growing incidents of preventable ailments, businesses lose ailing workers, and schools deal with students whose health and cognitive abilities are not optimal due to pollution exposure. The costs to our society are enormous.

We believe that all Americans have the right to the basic necessities of life: air, water, and food that is both clean and healthful. We also believe that it is the responsibility of governmental agencies such as the EPA to protect our environment and precious natural resources for our benefit and for the benefit of generations to come.

The League of Women Voters believes that the Air Toxics Rule is in the public interest and we strongly encourage the EPA to implement it without delay.

Thank you for letting us testify today.