

Anti-Biomass Incineration – Forest Protection Campaign

PRESS RELEASE

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Incinerator Opponents Say Congress About to Pass a “Dirty Energy” Bill Disguised as Clean and Green Energy

Doctors and Citizen Groups Say That an RES or Other Legislation With Incinerators That Burn Trees and Garbage is Dirty Energy, Will Make People Sick and Cause More Global Warming

Washington D.C.—The Anti-Biomass Incineration - Forest Protection Campaign is telling Congress and the Administration that the Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) being promoted by industry groups and some members of Congress is “dirty energy” legislation because it promotes toxic incinerators that make people sick, pollute air and water, destroy forests, and dry up rivers.

“These dirty incinerators emit toxic air pollution that causes cancer, asthma and heart disease,” said Attorney Margaret Sheehan, of the Biomass Accountability Project, “and they don’t reduce global warming, they increase it.”

The Campaign delivered a letter to Congress signed by public health, social justice, and environmental organizations opposing any legislation that further subsidizes dirty incinerators, including the RES, and proposed energy and farm bill amendments.

Groundbreaking scientific reports issued in June 2010 by the Manomet Center for Conservation Science and the Environmental Working Group conclusively show that biomass incineration using forests as fuel will undermine efforts to curb carbon emissions.

Sheehan continued, “Congress should follow the example of Massachusetts and require accurate accounting of the CO2 emissions generated from biomass incineration. The science shows that biomass incinerators are dirtier than gas, oil and even coal, and therefore cannot truthfully be called clean energy. Our taxpayer and ratepayer dollars should support renewable energy technologies without toxic smokestacks, such as wind, solar and water energy. Any benefits to the economy from subsidizing biomass and garbage incinerators disguised as clean energy are clearly outweighed by the health care costs that will be borne by all Americans to help those inflicted with the asthma, cancer, respiratory illness and other diseases caused by these incinerators.”

Mike Ewall of the Energy Justice Network said, “It is time to break through the wall of disinformation from smokestack industries. The fact is incinerators are poisonous to humans. Burning trees and garbage for electricity spews the most toxic substances known to science into communities, poisoning our children, the air we breathe and the water we drink with mercury, lead, dioxins, and nanoparticulates.”

According to Ewall, “When people find out the facts about dirty biomass incinerator proposals in their communities, the opposition is overwhelming and most proposals are defeated. Yet today Congress wants to further promote these incinerators with a federal RES, and other provisions tucked into various pieces of legislation, where these incinerators hide behind the rubric of ‘clean and green,’ hoping Americans won’t realize what is really happening. Taxpayers expect that these renewable energy mandates will bring wind and solar to their communities, not smokestack industries, who are the main ones benefiting from these overly-broad ‘renewable’ energy laws. We are calling on Congress to remove biomass and garbage incinerators from the RES.”

Pediatrician Dr. Bill Sammons stated: “The simple fact is that the combustion of biomass—wood, trash, construction debris—is “dirtier” than burning coal. Per megawatt hour of power generated, in comparison to coal,

burning wood to produce electricity generates 1.5 times as much carbon, more nitrogen oxide, more sulfur dioxide, and comparable amounts of particulate matter. Because these incinerators will spew these poisonous compounds 24 hours a day for up to 30 years, they will cause generations of serious health problems that lead to illness and early death.”

Leading medical organizations including the American Lung Association, Massachusetts Medical Society, North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, the Florida Medical Association and Physicians for Social Responsibility oppose incentives for biomass incinerators because they present an “unacceptable health risk.”

Cheryl Johncox of the Buckeye Forest Council said, “Ohio is ground zero for biomass incineration and forest destruction. These proposed biomass-burning schemes will use whole trees that otherwise would not be cut. This is a double whammy: significantly reducing our major source of carbon sequestration while spewing all that carbon directly into the atmosphere. These proposals will require sixty times the amount of “forest residue” in Ohio. They will devastate Ohio public and private forests, as well as likely consume forests of other states and even Canada.”

According to ecologist George Wuerthner, a noted authority on forest ecosystems, most of the forests of the United States have already been logged too much. “Over a century of heavy logging and road-building has caused the loss of most of our remaining old forests, and greatly diminished the diversity of plants and animals on our public and private lands. The soils of nation’s forests are severely depleted. Hundreds of forest species are on the threatened or endangered species list. The latest scientific evidence continues to show that the best way to care for our nation’s forest ecosystems, especially on public lands, is to allow the forests to naturally re-grow, preventing logging in critical areas like ancient and roadless forests, and logging much less in other areas. This will also maximize the amount of carbon that is sequestered by our forests, helping combat climate change.”

Wuerthner continued, “Wyden’s forest bill, which promotes vastly increased logging on eight million acres of eastside forests as a supposed way to “restore” these forest ecosystems has little basis in science. More logging will not prevent or reduce fires, which are natural parts of the ecological cycle, as this bill falsely asserts. Increased logging in Oregon’s forests, and forests across America, will cause more carbon to be released into the atmosphere, exacerbating global warming. The notion that America’s forests have waste that is available for burning in incinerators is also scientifically baseless. The branches, bark, and forest debris need to be left in the forest to build up the forest soils which have been heavily depleted after a century of too much logging. If hundreds of new incinerators are constructed which burn forest materials, our nation’s forests will be devastated.”

According to Carl Ross of Save America’s Forests, “Forests accumulate carbon and sequester it for hundreds, even thousands of years. By increasing logging in our nation’s forests, we will be destroying the best carbon sequestration ecosystems on earth – natural forests. Trying to solve global warming by cutting down forests and burning them in incinerators is like shooting holes in the Titanic to let the water out – it doesn’t work – in fact the opposite happens. Cutting down forests and incinerating the trees releases carbon and causes more global warming.” Ross continued, “Calling tree incineration clean energy is really tricking the American people, not solving our energy crisis.”

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