

Sen. Mary Jo White: Senator White to DEP: Stop the dishonesty.

State Senator Mary Jo White (R-Venango), chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, condemned repeated misrepresentations by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in the ongoing debate over crafting a state-specific mercury reduction rule.

Earlier, DEP issued a press release announcing the Environmental Quality Board's (EQB) approval of a state-specific mercury rule for public comment as a proposed rulemaking. DEP's press release states – out of context – the objections of the Pennsylvania Coal Association (PCA) and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to the federal Clean Air Mercury Rule. DEP is silent on both organizations' repeated statements that they strongly oppose the proposed rulemaking approved today by the EQB, and instead prefer the federal approach to reducing mercury emissions.

“The statements by DEP serve a sole purpose: to intentionally misrepresent the position of PCA and the UMWA regarding the federal Clean Air Mercury Rule,” said White. “DEP is implying that because PCA and UMWA expressed concern over a narrow portion of the federal rulemaking, these organizations must therefore be supportive of the DEP state-specific rule. This is simply dishonest on the part of DEP.”

Senator White is the prime sponsor of Senate Bill 1201, legislation designed to reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. Similar bipartisan legislation (HB 2610) has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Dave Reed (R-Indiana). Both bills would employ a cap-and-trade program to achieve compliance requirements in a cost-effective and proven manner.

In an April 27, 2006 letter to the General Assembly, both PCA and UMWA expressed their strong support for SB 1201 and HB 2610, and their dismay at DEP's misrepresentation of their position on the federal mercury rule. The UMWA further called these statements by DEP Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty “outrageous, misleading and offensive.”

“DEP talks about public involvement being critical to decision-making. Sadly, they continue to utilize public deceit to arrive at their predetermined destination: a mercury rule which imposes huge costs on ratepayers, threatens our generating capacity and provides no commensurate environmental or health benefit over the reductions to be achieved under the federal mercury reduction rule,” said White. “DEP is entitled to their position on what constitutes an appropriate mercury rule; they are not entitled to lie about the position of other organizations to advance their cause.”

Senator White has announced her intent to schedule a third public hearing on this issue; information from prior hearings is available online at www.senatormjwhite.com.