

JANUARY 22, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY CALLS ON EPA TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED MERCURY STANDARDS IN CHICAGO**

**CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today called on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) not to limit the public's ability to voice their concerns about proposed regulation to limit mercury emission.**

**Schakowsky urged the EPA to hold one public hearing in Chicago or other locations in Region 5 " *on the recently issued mercury rules for electric power plants and to extend the public comment period on the rules by 30 days.*"**

**In a letter to EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt, Schakowsky warned about the dangers of Mercury and highlighted that in Illinois, "four statewide fish consumption advisories warn children and women who may become pregnant to limit the locally-caught fish they eat due to the high levels of mercury in the fish."**

**On December 15, EPA proposed standards for mercury emissions from power plants that may result in as much as three times more mercury being emitted. Administrator Leavitt, however, limited the public's ability to comment on the proposal by announcing that he would hold one or two field hearings and limit the comment period to only 60 days.**

**Below is Schakowsky's letter to EPA Administrator Leavitt:**

January 22, 2004

Administrator Michael O. Leavitt  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Leavitt,

I write today on behalf of my constituents to urge you to hold at least one public hearing in Region 5 on the recently issued mercury rules for electric power plants and to extend the public comment period on the rules by 30 days. In your effort to finalize regulations that have taken over a decade to develop, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should not limit the public's ability to participate by holding only one or two hearings and taking comment for only sixty days.

The future health of the residents of Region 5 will be especially impacted by this proposal. In Illinois, four statewide fish consumption advisories warn children and women who may become pregnant to limit the locally-caught fish they eat due to the high levels of mercury in the fish. Exposure to mercury in utero places newborns at risk of neurological impairment. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report in January 2003 found that 1 in 12 women of childbearing age has mercury levels above EPA's safe health threshold.

Further mercury contamination is also a threat to recreational fishing-a vital piece of our national and state economies. Recreational fishing is a multibillion dollar industry; in 2001 alone, fishermen in Illinois spent \$598,367,000. Studies indicate that mercury contamination has a direct impact on where people choose to fish, how often they go, and for how long they choose to fish. Thus, as mercury pollution increases, detrimental impacts to our national and state economies can be anticipated.

A strong EPA mercury standard will trigger results. Recent research documents the ability for ecosystems to recover from elevated mercury levels. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has found that only a couple of years after dramatically reducing mercury emissions from incinerators in southern Florida, mercury levels in fish decreased to the point where consumption advisories for bass were removed.

My constituents should not be limited in their ability to comment on a proposed regulation that has such a large potential impact on their lives. I urge you allow the people of Region 5 to be heard on your proposed mercury regulations by holding a field hearing in the region and by extending your comment period by 30 days. Thank you and I look forward to your response.

□□□□□□□□ Sincerely,

□□□□□□□□□□ Jan Schakowsky  
□□□□□□□□□□ Member of Congress