

# Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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**For Immediate Release**  
**August 28, 2012**

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## **North Carolina Utilities Commission Tries to Silence Affected Communities League Launches Multi-State Campaign to Stop Biomass Incineration**

Today residents of communities targeted for waste-burning power plants were denied the right to speak at the North Carolina Utilities Commission hearing in Raleigh. The denial sparked charges of bias and injustice from the silenced groups. The Commission, convened to consider deadlines affecting animal waste power generators, did grant electric utilities and poultry, pork and energy groups the opportunity to testify.

Up until yesterday, residents from rural Duplin, Sampson, Montgomery, Person, Surry, Chester counties and others in North Carolina and South Carolina had expected to carry the message to the Utilities Commission that they oppose polluting waste-to-energy plants in their communities, also known as biomass power plants. At issue were hog and poultry waste set-asides established by renewable energy legislation in 2007.

Lou Zeller, Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said, "Once again, the Commission is catering to the power companies and their allies." His testimony detailed the ongoing failure of the renewable energy portfolio standard (REPS) to promote waste-burning power plants, concluding, "The REPS are a dead letter and will never be met."

William Frederick, Sr. had traveled from Sampson County to Raleigh to tell the Commission that he and his neighbors would not tolerate dirty waste burners sold as so-called green energy in their communities. Although prevented from speaking, he said he would not give up and added, "The principals of environmental justice require fairness, an open door and an open mind. We cannot allow the Commission to trample on our right to be heard."

Also in the hearing room and forced to remain silent was Jimmy Bruce, who led

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the successful opposition to a power plant near his home in South Carolina which could have burned 200 thousand tons of trash per year. He said, "We got called a lot of bad names fighting that incinerator, but we sure had an open debate. What has gone wrong with the Old North State?"

Sam Tesh, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League's Co-President, faulted the Utilities Commission's bias, saying, "We don't want a lapdog, we need a watchdog to protect the public from greed, pollution and sweetheart energy deals." Tesh led the successful drive to stop Fibrowatt in Surry County.

Addressing the issue before the Commission, Therese Vick, BREDL Healthy and Sustainable Communities Coordinator, said, "Now is the time to end the set asides once and for all, and with the changes in North Carolina's Air Toxics standards, these facilities would be dirtier than ever. Instead of pushing these stinky proposals, the utilities should focus on clean energy, like solar and wind." Although barred from the hearing, Vick vowed to expand the League's campaign begun five years ago to halt waste-to-energy proposals wherever they appear.

The NC General Assembly enacted the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard in 2007, Senate Bill 3, Session Law 2007-397. The hearing held today by the North Carolina Utilities Commission dealt with the latest request by Duke Energy, Progress Energy, Dominion Power and others to delay the requirement that they generate a certain percentage of their power using chicken and swine manure. Under discussion was a possible settlement agreement involving the electric power suppliers and the NC Poultry Federation, the NC Pork Council, the NC Farm Bureau and the NC Sustainable Energy Association.

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984 and has chapters in seven states.

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