

Testimony of Curt Havens
Before the Subcommittee on Energy and Environment
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
April 14, 2011

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Curt Havens and I live in Chester, West Virginia, 1,584 feet from the nearest finger of Little Blue Run unlined coal ash impoundment. Our home is 100 feet below the elevation of the impoundment.

In 1974, a Bruce Mansfield representative knocked at our door and handed me and my wife a beautiful laid out plan of a recreational place that would have hiking, bike trails, fishing and a place to spend time with my family. But today that same site is not a beautiful lake, it is a toxic waste dump site called Little Blue. The impoundment is 1300 acres and 400 feet deep in some places. It has a high-hazard dam that, if breeched, would cause loss of human life.

We believe the land that God has given us to take care of is being destroyed by this coal ash impoundment since 1975. The smell of rotten egg and sulfur hangs in the air near our homes. And, several of our neighbors are experiencing water gushes on their land and into their springs – water gushes were not there before First Energy began filling the West Virginia side of the impoundment.

First Energy did acknowledge a correlation between their impoundment and the offsite seeps when they met with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) on October 27, 2010. We already have problems and worry that First Energy plans to dump more toxic ash near our homes. First Energy will be stacking geotubes, filled with toxic ash on the impoundment 62 feet high. We worry this additional ash will push more water towards the seeps on the WV side.

The seeps coming from the Little Blue pond are contaminated. On August 24, 2010 the WVDEP did two water tests on seeps/springs, and the end result was high levels of cadmium in both tests. As I understand it, cadmium appears to be the largest single contributor to thyroid disease. I had thyroid cancer in 2001 and had my total thyroid removed. My wife Debbie has a lump on her thyroid that the Doctor found in 2009. The Doctor keeps a close eye on it. My neighbor around 30

years of age has a lump on his thyroid and a tumor on his spine and another neighbor around 70 years of age had thyroid cancer and prostate cancer in 2008. My Doctor told me that thyroid cancer is more common in women than men.

We have found out there are ten monitoring wells at Little Blue that have high levels of arsenic, and no one told us about them. We found that out after reviewing public documents. Even more troubling is the fact that on January 25, 2006 the WVDEP turned our rights over to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). This is West Virginia. This land does not belong to Pennsylvania.

I have pictures of the dam from 1996 and they show the dam full of strange, blue water ... today, there is no water. Where did all this water go? We believe it has been discharged to area drinking water.

We don't believe we can depend on the WVDEP or PADEP to protect our health from the known toxic metals found in coal ash. We believe the only way to get health protections from toxic coal ash are through federal rules – and require the states to enforce those protections.

I have concerns about my wife's health and my health because I have grown a family garden on my land for the past 34 years and have fed my children and my grandchildren from it.

I have been honored to serve my country as a Yeomen 3rd Class aboard the USS John S. McCain (DDG-36) in the Navy. Now I come to Washington, DC this week to speak to members of Congress and the administration asking for strong federal protections for my family and community.

We are only on earth one time. Please help us keep it safe and make a better place to live for us and our grandchildren. We understand jobs are important – but no one should have to choose jobs OR health. We need and deserve both.

I thank you for this opportunity to share my experiences with this committee. I am happy to answer any questions.