

**Church of the Brethren • Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) •
Commission on Religion in Appalachia • Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
– Evangelical Lutheran Church in America • Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns •
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. • National Council of Churches •
NETWORK • Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office • Unitarian
Universalist Association of Congregations • General Board of Church and Society of
The United Methodist Church**

March 16, 2004

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

President Bush:

As representatives of the faith community, we call on you to protect the integrity of God's creation and the health and wholeness of all God's children. We are alarmed at the ongoing environmental degradation and the growing threat to public health and safety posed by industrial emissions – particularly from power plants – and we ask that you use the full legal authority granted by the Clean Air Act to enforce strict controls on these emissions.

Among the greatest environmental threats facing our communities today is exposure to hazardous mercury pollution. We are deeply troubled, therefore, by the release of proposed rules by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would delay significant reduction in these emissions until 2018 or later.

Mounting evidence, including data from EPA's own scientists, demonstrates the pervasive nature of this threat. Over forty states have issued advisories limiting consumption of fish caught in lakes or rivers due to the presence of the bioaccumulating neurotoxin methylmercury. Recent studies estimate that nearly 15 percent of women of child-bearing age have blood mercury concentrations higher than the level considered safe for fetal development – putting as many as 630,000 newborns each year at risk for serious developmental impairment.

We believe it is unacceptable and immoral to sacrifice our children's health and futures for the sake of current consumption patterns and lifestyle choices. The present threat to our communities health and the integrity of God's creation is clear. The "cost" of the proposed delay in enforcement will be measured not in dollars, but in the unrealized potential of millions of children whose capacity for learning will be impaired.

As people of faith, we believe every child is a precious gift from God entrusted to our care and collective responsibility. In faithfully responding to this call, we therefore ask you to withdraw the proposed rules on mercury emissions and enforce existing Clean Air Act requirements to ensure that all God's children have the opportunity to grow up in communities free from this environmental hazard.

Sincerely,

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Director – Washington Office
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