

CAC LETTER TO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION RE: WASTE IMPORTS

Dear :

I am writing on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Council¹ to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection about an issue with which we have long been involved, the amount of municipal waste imported into Pennsylvania. Our concern with waste importation was reignited last year by New York's announcement of plans to close the Fresh Kills Landfill and proposal to export more municipal waste to Pennsylvania and other states. It continues to be a major issue at each year's regional meetings during which we listen to testimony about environmental issues and concerns in the various regions of Pennsylvania. We ask for your action on this issue which is critical to Pennsylvania's future.

Council has a long-standing position that all states should shoulder responsibility for meeting their own disposal needs. Pennsylvania has taken the initiative to become self-sufficient in meeting the municipal waste disposal needs of our own citizens. We have established stringent controls and standards for municipal waste disposal in order to protect public and environmental health. We have empowered our counties to plan for municipal waste disposal, and set aggressive recycling goals to minimize the amount of waste requiring disposal. As a result, over 7 million Pennsylvanians are now recycling.

In 1995 Pennsylvania imported just over 6.6 million tons of municipal waste from 22 states, a 94 percent increase from the amount imported in 1989. I AM WAITING ON 1996 INFORMATION TO UPDATE THIS SECTION. This increased volume of waste places a burden on Pennsylvania's citizenry by decreasing the lifetime of existing capacity available for use, disrupting our municipal waste planning process, and increasing the adverse effects associated with such facilities, e.g., truck traffic, highway degradation, air emissions, odor, noise, etc. While there are existing contracts and bond issues that need to be addressed, Pennsylvania should not be a dumping ground for other states' wastes. The citizens of a targeted municipality should be able to determine the future of their community as it relates to waste imports.

We recognize that this is not a new issue. In past years, Pennsylvania has made several attempts to control the amount of municipal waste being imported into Pennsylvania from other states and nations. Each time, however, these attempts have been unsuccessful because of conflicts with the Interstate Commerce Clause of the US Constitution. Obviously, Congress must take action to allow those states who are dealing with their own waste in a responsible fashion to limit importation.

Council urges you to work aggressively to pass federal legislation that would provide an equitable framework to require each state to be responsible for providing capacity within its borders for the disposal of its citizens' household waste, and giving states authority over importation of out of state waste.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. Please call Susan Wilson, Council's Executive Director at (717) 787 - 4527 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Hill
Chairperson

cc: Governor Ridge

¹ The Council is a legislatively created advisory committee charged with reviewing all environmental issues, legislation, regulations, policies and programs.