

Durbin Applauds EPA For Taking Action Against Facilities Contributing To Coal Ash Contamination

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today applauded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for holding facilities accountable for contributing to decades of coal ash contamination and taking steps to protect communities impacted by the environmental hazard. Produced by the burning of coal in coal-fired power plants, coal ash is one of the largest types of industrial waste produced in the U.S. and can lead to dangerous levels of contaminants in waterways, groundwater, drinking water, and the air. The operation, decommissioning, and clean up of these facilities often burden the communities that they occupy with the resulting pollution, and disproportionately burden environmental justice communities, who should not be responsible for the decades of poor contaminant management.

“Coal ash has infiltrated our groundwater and become an environmental and public health concern for communities throughout Illinois, particularly impacting black and brown communities. It’s long past time to correct this environmental injustice, and I’m glad to see EPA finally take this threat seriously—committing to cleaning up our natural resources and putting those responsible on notice that enforcement is certain,” said Durbin.

In today’s announcement, EPA committed to steps to protect communities from coal ash contamination by:

- Proposing decisions on requests for extensions to the current deadline for initiating closure of unlined coal combustion residuals (CCR or coal ash) surface impoundments;
- Putting several facilities on notice regarding their obligations to comply with CCR regulations and;
- Laying out plans for future regulatory actions to ensure coal ash impoundments meet strong environmental and safety standards.