

Statement of George Leventhal
Vice President, Montgomery County Council
At a Public Hearing Before the Maryland Department of Environment
Regarding Mirant's Application for a Title V Permit for its Dickerson Plant
Monday, June 13, 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is George Leventhal and I am the Vice President of the Montgomery County Council. I am here to request a much stronger effort by the state of Maryland to reduce polluting emissions from Mirant's Dickerson plant.

The Dickerson plant is the single biggest source of air pollution in Montgomery County. Nitrogen oxide emissions from this one power plant are equal to the emissions from every registered passenger automobile in the county.

As County Council Vice President and Chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee, I want to see that we are doing all we can to protect the health and well being of our county residents. The Mirant plant poses a threat to both our health and our environment. Consultants for the EPA estimate that fine particle pollution from power plants cuts short the lives of 687 Marylanders each year¹. Air pollution from power plants is estimated to cause 85 lung cancer deaths and 1,014 heart attacks in Maryland each year². Air pollution from power plants sends 180,000 greater Washington, D.C. area residents to the hospital each year and 3,900 to the emergency room³. Infants in areas with high levels of particulate matter pollution face a 26-percent increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and a 40-percent increased risk of respiratory death⁴. Maryland has a mercury health advisory on all its rivers and lakes, including the Potomac. Women of childbearing age and children are advised to limit strictly the amount of fish they eat from these rivers⁵.

Global climate change may be the greatest challenge our generation faces. We have to act now to solve it and preserve our environment and economy for future generations. I have sponsored legislation to encourage alternatives to coal power, such as purchases of wind power by Montgomery County government and individual homeowners. While these efforts will help to solve global climate change, nothing will make as big a difference as Mirant taking action. The Dickerson plant is the single biggest source of global warming gases in our county. Montgomery County is calling on Mirant to be a good neighbor by:

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1. Installing available technology to dramatically cut mercury, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions.
2. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions either through new technologies, local offsets (like wind power) or carbon sequestration; and
3. Supporting a bill to reducing these four pollutants in the entire state of Maryland.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address these issues this evening.

June 13, 2005

Kendl P. Philbrick
Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd.
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Dear Secretary Philbrick:

We are writing to express concern over the Maryland Department of the Environment's consideration of a Title V permit for Mirant's Dickerson facility, and would respectfully urge the Ehrlich Administration to support efforts to substantially reduce power plant emissions in Maryland.

The dangers of nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, mercury, and carbon dioxide are well known. Since the emissions profile of each of these four pollutants indicates that power plants are one of the major sources, it makes sense to control these pollutants at the source, as called for in HB 1169 and SB 744, the Four Pollutant Bill. The failure of the Ehrlich administration to significantly address this issue has been a major set back for Maryland's air quality. For example, nitrogen oxide emissions from the Mirant facility are equal to the emissions from the entire registered passenger fleet of cars in Montgomery County.

Earlier this year, we joined a broad coalition of environmental groups in fighting for the 4P legislation to restrict power plant emissions. Rather than join this fight, Governor Ehrlich and others – including Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley – sat on the sidelines and watched this important environmental and public health initiative go down to defeat.

Real leaders make tough decisions and fight for what is right. We believe that reducing harmful emissions and making our air cleaner for our children is the right thing to do – and we intend to keep on fighting. We urge the Ehrlich and O'Malley Administrations to join us in the fight to reduce the release of harmful pollutants into our atmosphere. None of us will ever regret the steps we take today to make the air we breathe safer for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

George Leventhal
Montgomery County Council