

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.266

Rep. Tyrone Carter offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to oppose actions by the United States
2 Environmental Protection Agency to weaken the Mercury and Air
3 Toxics Standards.

4 Whereas, The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) are a
5 federal rule that regulates emissions of mercury and other
6 hazardous air pollutants from coal- and oil-fired power plants. The
7 MATS rule was put in place to protect the health of people across
8 the country, particularly children and seniors who are more
9 vulnerable to the health impacts of mercury and other harmful
10 pollutants; and

11 Whereas, On April 16, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection
12 Agency (EPA) finalized its conclusion that it is not "appropriate
13 and necessary" to regulate the emissions of air toxics from power



1 plants because the economic costs are higher than the public health
2 benefits of the rule; and

3 Whereas, EPA's decision was based on a flawed cost-benefit
4 analysis of the rule that disregards the indirect impacts on public
5 health, referred to as co-benefits, and does not include any of the
6 new scientific evidence demonstrating the direct benefits of the
7 rule. The decision will remove EPA's legal justification for
8 enforcing the MATS rule and will leave the rule vulnerable to
9 future court challenges; and

10 Whereas, This change will undermine regulations limiting
11 mercury and other toxins, jeopardizing the health of Michigan
12 residents both from pollution and COVID-19. Mortality rates from
13 COVID-19 tend to be higher in counties with higher levels of long-
14 term air pollution. Communities of color, which already suffer from
15 a disproportionate burden of illness and death, could be
16 particularly affected by these regulatory changes; and

17 Whereas, Human exposure is not limited to the air we breathe.
18 When coal is burned, toxins, including mercury, fall from the sky
19 into our lakes and streams or are swept into our waterways by
20 rainfall and snowmelt. Once it is in our water, mercury becomes
21 part of the food chain and builds up in large fish that are often
22 headed to consumer markets. A large number of Michigan's waters
23 cannot be enjoyed to their fullest because of mercury pollution;
24 and

25 Whereas, This rollback runs counter to decades of scientific
26 consensus on the health and environmental hazards of mercury. The
27 harmful effects of mercury on people and wildlife are well-
28 documented. In Michigan, pregnant women are warned against eating
29 certain fish due to the mercury levels in fish. Mercury accumulates

1 in the body over time, which can damage a baby's developing brain
2 and nervous system, impairing the child's IQ and motor skills. The
3 devastating health effects of mercury are undeniable; and

4 Whereas, Despite the COVID-19 crisis we are facing today, the
5 Trump administration and the EPA continue their series of attacks
6 on public health and the Great Lakes, compounding the health and
7 economic impacts of the pandemic. Rolling back environmental
8 controls will increase pollution in our air, lakes, rivers, and
9 streams with devastating effects on human health, tourism,
10 businesses, and our state's economy; now, therefore, be it

11 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we oppose
12 actions by the United States Environmental Protection Agency to
13 weaken the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards; and be it further

14 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the
15 Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency
16 and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.