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LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
28TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

October 22, 2009

The Honorable Pete Grannis  
Commissioner  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233

Dear Honorable Grannis,

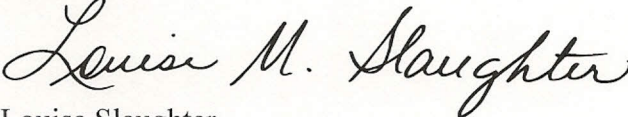
I write to request your help in addressing the elevated benzene levels that are jeopardizing the health of residents in and around Tonawanda, New York. I appreciate the Department of Environmental Conservation's efforts to address this issue thus far and urge your continued action to ensure that Tonawanda Coke is in compliance with state and federal regulations. Specifically, I ask that your office help develop a benzene reduction plan as soon as possible to significantly reduce benzene emissions from the Tonawanda Coke plant.

Alarming, the Tonawanda air quality study released by your agency this year found significantly high concentrations of benzene in the air in and around the Town of Tonawanda that greatly exceed the state average. Specifically, the study found that regional benzene levels are 75 times greater than New York State guidelines and that Tonawanda Coke is a predominant source of this benzene. According to the Centers for Disease Control, benzene is a known carcinogen that can have harmful effects on bone marrow and can cause a decrease in red blood cells, excessive bleeding, and compromise the immune system.

Every day local residents, many of whom are already suffering from numerous health problems, are breathing this air and being exposed to hazardous chemicals like benzene. While regulatory agency involvement has helped spur Tonawanda Coke to begin reducing ammonia emissions from the facility's ammonia still, it is critical for the DEC to similarly act to help craft a Benzene Reduction Plan to ensure Tonawanda Coke operates safely for its workers and neighbors.

I appreciate the DEC's continued focus to address this air quality situation and request that you continue to keep my office and local residents informed of ongoing developments. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. Please contact Zena Shuber Dorsey, in my Buffalo District Office at 716-853-5813 if my office can address any questions or be of any assistance with this request.

Sincerely,



Louise Slaughter  
Member of Congress

cc: Ms. Erin Heaney, Executive Director, Clean Air Coalition of WNY  
Mr. Micheal J. Basile, EPA, Western New York Public Information Office

LMS: