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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

July 31, 2009

Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Penn Ave NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson,

It is in the pursuit of the safety and well-being for the citizens of Tonawanda, New York that I write to you and urge your agency to accelerate efforts to address concerns of poor air quality due to the benzene emissions from the Tonawanda Coke Corporation. Recently collected data from a study funded by your agency in coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has shown that benzene levels in many areas in and around the Town of Tonawanda are up to seventy-five times higher than the New York State recommended guidelines. Benzene is a known carcinogen and residents of the Town of Tonawanda and the surrounding area are experiencing numerous health problems resulting from these harmful emissions.

In meeting with local residents and hearing their concerns, it has become clear that the EPA needs to play a more active role in addressing this serious situation. Therefore, I respectfully request that you meet with the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, a local advocacy group that is leading the charge to address the situation in Tonawanda, and which has diligently and successfully organized the collective concerns of this community, conducted air quality studies, and advocated for this community.

Furthermore, I request the EPA to establish an Environmental Benefits Program for the Tonawanda Coke Corporation as a way to fund health testing and clean-up of soot and other particulate matter.

Thank you for your attention to this request and hope that a meeting between you, your staff and the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York will yield substantive results. Please contact my Western New York Regional Director, Laura Krolczyk, at 716-854-9725 if we can be of any assistance or answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Cc: Commissioner Pete Grannis, NYSDEC
Kenneth Eng, EPA Region 2