

Written Remarks of Commissioner Albert Turner, Jr. On Perry County's Coal Ash

The day has come when Perry County, Alabama, the birth home of Coretta Scott King, has finally pulled itself up by its own boot straps and has joined in on the American dream. A place where the unemployment rate is above 15%, but our high school graduation rate is above 95%. Perry County, Alabama is the place where in 1970s had more Ph. Ds per capital than any other county in Alabama. Perry County, Alabama is the place where the modern Voting Rights Movement started in 1965 with the night march and death of Jimmy Lee Jackson, who was shot at point blank range for seeking the right to vote in a demonstration march led by my father Albert Turner, Sr. Perry County, Alabama is the only county in the nation to hold an official county holiday celebrating the historic election of President Barack Obama. Perry County, Alabama now is the first place in the South to construct a "state of the art" landfill that will be an environmental safe disposal site for coal ash. The economic development opportunity, along with safe environmental management practices has put renewed hope back into a once proud county.

Perry County led the way during the 1960s in the field of civil and voting right; we are now poised to lead the way in environmental disposal of coal ash. The contract between TVA and Arrowhead Landfill has provided the county with an economic boost, unseen since the state of Texas struck oil. The windfall has allowed the county to put together a master plan of economic development and infrastructure advancements unseen in this rural Alabama County. A county that now will have a budget of eight million dollars a year to service eleven thousands citizens. In plain words, we have transformed one of the poorest counties per capital in Alabama to one of the more affluent counties in Alabama. Perry County now will have almost one million dollars per one thousand residents. The Perry County Commission is set to move our county in a direction that will see a much improved community starting with our infrastructure. Through President Obama's stimulus package and the monies that have been received from the coal ash

agreement, we have parlayed \$300,000.00 into a \$5,000,000.00 water expansion for the residents. Thanks to both the President and TVA decision to dispose of its coal ash in Perry County. Now, more than 96% of the residents of Perry County will have clean fresh drinking water. Thanks to Arrowhead and TVA the tonnage payments will provide our school system with more than \$500,000.00 over the next year. These funds saved our system from massive layoff and the cutting of vital educational afterschool programs. These funds will keep our school system with a reserve and push ahead with plans to keep our system ranked in the top 15% of all school systems in Alabama. Tonnage fees have allowed both cities located in Perry County (Marion and Uniontown) to meet their obligations and allow room for economic growth. The monies have allowed us to seek grants, now that we have matching funds as required.

Now that Perry County is poised to join the ranks of the haves, those naysayers shout environmental racism. It would be economic racism if EPA or TVA stops the flow of cash for ash. It would be environmental racism if the way the industry prior to Arrowhead Landfill's "state of the art facility" be allowed to continue to dig a hole in the backyard of African American communities and fill it with water and coal ash. There are hundreds of unlined ash ponds around the country that have been in operation for decades. These ash ponds do not have the level of controls that are in place at the Perry County Arrowhead landfill facility, however, environmentalists have not said a word. Now, that Perry County stands to make millions of dollars per year on the spill in the river and even more from the remainder of ash on site at TVA, environmentalists are now concerned about the environment. I wonder if the concern is about a once poor economically depressed African American government run county joining the ranks of the affluent, educated, infrastructural sound and economically poised to move her to the American dream is their real concern and not the environment. Environmentalists groups have not called for a congressional hearing. Environmental groups have not called for an investigation into the disposal of coal ash. Environmentalists have not appeared on any 60 Minutes television documentaries to highlight their concerns. Environmentalists have not requested any EPA oversight. No protest by environmentalists or

any other group over the disposal of coal ash prior to Perry County receiving coal ash. . To this date, there have been no mentions of the effects of the legacy ponds that exist in Alabama and around the country. This lack of action by environmentalists leads me to believe that all the attention placed on Perry County and its agreement with TVA/Arrowhead is about economics not the environment.

Since the deployment of the ash to Perry County in June of 2009, 65 Perry County residents have been employed making more than average salaries, according to Arrowhead documents. The Perry County Commission has received more than \$500,000.00. The county has expanded its water system. New home construction has increased. There have been zero foreclosures. Thirty-six miles of new roads have been paved, bond debt payments from our two cities have been caught up, and 15 grant applications have been approved ranging from housing to healthcare to education. Now, the Marion wastewater treatment facility is in line for necessary upgrades with money being received from tonnage payments. I come to Washington, DC to tell this committee that without the mishap in Tennessee, the blessings in Alabama would not be possible.

On behalf of the 11,735 citizens and the one citizen who has come to the Perry County Commission and voiced her complaint not about the coal ash itself, but about the amount of coal ash that we would be receiving, I say thank you and send us some more.