

# OPINION

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## Mercury plan protects kids' health

Kudos to Gov. Rod Blagojevich for taking a strong stand for public health with his proposal to reduce mercury pollution from Illinois coal plants by 90%. This administration is making it clear that putting our children at risk for brain damage is not an acceptable cost of doing business in this state.

Mercury accumulates in the environment and causes serious health effects—including developmental delays, learning disabilities, loss of vision and motor skills and even heart damage. Unfortunately, scientists have found that Lake Michigan is more contaminated than any of the Great Lakes, largely due to coal plants on its shores.

With the development of inexpensive pollution controls to capture this mercury before it's emitted by coal plants, there is no longer any excuse for allowing this health threat to persist. The reaction from Illinois power industry lobbyists claiming that the mercury reduction targets are impossible or too expensive frankly threatens credibility to the breaking point.

This move makes Illinois the fourth state to adopt a 90% or better reduction standard for mercury,

joining Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Illinois' decision to join these states is especially significant due to the much larger fleet of coal-burning power plants sited here. With Gov. Blagojevich's leadership, we hope that other governors in the Midwest will step up to the plate to protect children's health from this unnecessary threat.

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