



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION FUND

122 State Street, #201A
Madison, WI 53703-2500

Phone: (608) 256-0827
Fax: (608) 256-1761

<http://www.lwwwi.org>
lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org

March 17, 2009

To: Assembly Natural Resources Committee

Re: Support AB 114

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has a long history of supporting policies and programs designed to protect air quality in the State. Consistent with that history, we urge you to support AB 114 giving the DNR the authority to issue citations for illegal open burning.

Open burning presents a number of serious health hazards to Wisconsin citizens. According to the 2003 Report of the Stakeholder Steering Group on Open Burning and Backyard Dumping, open burning is the number one uncontrolled source of dioxin emissions, the number one cause of wildfires, and the number one source of citizen complaints to the DNR on air pollution matters. Studies by both the EPA and Environment Canada have consistently identified residential burning of household garbage as a significant anthropogenic source of dioxins.

Although humans do not ingest dioxin directly by breathing smoke from a neighbor's burn barrel, dioxin emissions from burn barrels land on feed crops and are concentrated in the bodies of farm animals. The majority of dioxin intake to humans thus comes from food sources, especially animal fats and dairy products. Because burn barrels are used predominantly in rural and agricultural areas, the danger is obvious. Other air pollutants associated with burn barrels, such as volatile organics, fine particulate matter, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals, are ingested directly by humans who inhale the smoke from burning garbage.

There is no technological fix for the problems associated with open burning, such as burn barrel design. The only solution is for people to stop burning garbage. The fact that open burning continues to be a serious problem, despite a 25-year history of being illegal, points to the need for better enforcement. AB 114 provides an enforcement mechanism which is not oppressive. We urge you to support it.