



U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Statement Regarding EPA Decision on Uniontown, Alabama

March 16, 2018

As an agency that conducted its own fact-finding on environmental justice enforcement from the Environmental Protection Agency¹, we, by majority vote, express our deep concern over the EPA's recent decision to dismiss two Uniontown, AL civil rights investigations without violation findings. Sadly, these dismissals continue the EPA's disturbing and longstanding track record—which this Commission documented—of not making a formal finding of discrimination or denying or withdrawing financial assistance from a recipient for civil rights violations.

After our own investigation, which included meeting with and hearing from the affected residents of the Uniontown community, the Commission found that the EPA's decision to allow the movement and storage of coal ash in Uniontown did not fully consider the civil rights impacts. We also found the storage of coal ash in Uniontown has adversely impacted the surrounding community. These latest decisions by the EPA perpetuate the environmental injustice the Uniontown community must endure.

Environmental justice is a critical civil right that helps address the negative health outcomes in communities of color and low income communities who are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution. We will continue to monitor the EPA's enforcement of federal civil rights statutes, and find this is yet another distressing step in the wrong direction for the agency.

The Commission's 2016 Statutory Enforcement [Report](#), *Environmental Justice: Toxic Materials, Poor Economies, and the Impact on the Environment of Low-Income, Minority Communities*, examined the EPA's work under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12,898, with a focus on the civil rights implications of the placement of coal ash disposal facilities near communities of color and low-income communities like Uniontown, AL. In addition to the briefings held by the Commission in Washington, DC, two additional public meetings on the topic were coordinated that year by the Commission's North Carolina and Illinois State Advisory Committees.

¹ The USCCR investigation occurred prior to the appointment of Chair Catherine E. Lhamon and Commissioner Debo P. Adegbile.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For more information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).