



IN THE MAIL

Vol. 10, No. 2-3 Theme Issue on the Environment

The March 1988 *North Carolina Insight*, "Resources at Risk: Environmental Policy in North Carolina," is the most comprehensive analysis of North Carolina's environmental problems and policies to date.

You've helped educate citizens and policymakers, and you have provided environmental organizations and policymakers with an agenda for 1988 and the future. Keep up the good work.

*Bill Holman, Lobbyist
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Your special double issue on environmental policy was especially helpful. I have recommended it to a number of persons as a reference and resource.

However, I feel you erred in your recommendations (page 52).

First of all, you recommended a revolving loan fund for local landfill construction, but more landfills are not the answer. Also, present North Carolina regulations make it almost impossible to site a landfill.

More important, the last part of the first recommendation states: "The fund might be used . . . to open regional waste disposal centers, including *regional waste incinerators* to reduce waste volume before landfilling the remains" (emphasis mine).

The evidence against waste incinerators is voluminous. In brief, the major problems are air pollution; hardly any incinerator has so far been constructed to eliminate this. Next is the problem of ash disposal. The "remains" cannot be landfilled in the usual manner, as the ash is usually toxic or high in heavy metals. Lined ash disposal facilities collect water. Then one must somehow remove this toxic leachate. And finally, incineration does not result in the promised waste reduction.

In view of the many environmental drawbacks concerning landfills and incinerators, policymakers should seriously consider alternatives before appropriating government funds for their construction.

The solution to the solid waste crisis lies in a combination of waste reduction, reuse, recycling with source separation where feasible, recycled materials processing, and composting, in that order, with land disposal as a last alternative.

Leah Karpen, Weaverville

Vol. 10, No. 4 School Bus Safety

Your article in the June, 1988 issue of *North Carolina Insight* on the school bus safety situation in North Carolina was excellent. It addressed the major issues with fairness for all sides of the debate. I believe that one thing that your article has proven is that statistics are irrelevant in this matter. Good common sense is the more appropriate way of dealing with the problem of the age of bus drivers. It is the opinion of the N.C. School Bus Safety Committee that a fairly paid, well-trained corps of professional school bus drivers makes good common sense as opposed to what we have had in the past.

Another point that was not mentioned in your article is that North Carolina has historically underfinanced its school bus transportation program. North Carolina spends about 98 cents per mile of service while the national average is \$1.87. Michigan, with approximately the same number of pupils transported and number of buses, spends \$2.63 per mile of service. Even West Virginia, a state that has known economic depression much better than we have, spends at over twice the rate of North Carolina. The fact is that there are only five states that spend under \$1 per mile of service, and North Carolina is one of them.

With the future of our state being transported daily on almost 14,000 buses across our state, doesn't it make good common sense to provide the safest and most efficient school bus system available to us?

North Carolina has a long way to go, but we are on the right path. Articles such as yours should help shed light on what has become, until recently, a hidden problem.

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