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<http://marymargaretoliver.org/media.html>

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## **Rep. Oliver Introduces Legislation Aimed Regulating Georgia's Solid Waste Management**

ATLANTA – State Representative Mary Margaret Oliver (D-Decatur) today announced the introduction of House Bill 136. This legislation would make Georgia's wet and dry ash waste created by coal burning power plants monitored in a more consistent way.

"We must pay extra attention to this matter," said Rep. Oliver.

"Georgia's statutes are inconsistent right now, and Georgia Power has a big job ahead of itself as it goes about closing coal ponds."

Coal burning plants produce both dry and wet coal ash. Although Georgia's Solid Waste Treatment Act requires monitoring of dry ash ponds to ensure that they do not contaminate the local water supply, the act does not apply to wet coal ash. As a result, wet ash ponds in Georgia are monitored inconsistently based on size and Georgia's Safe Dam Act.

HB 136 would correct the inconsistency in state law by requiring all coal ash ponds to obtain a permit from Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD). To receive an EPD permit, the pond would need to have an adequate ground-water monitoring system. This measure will thus ensure that both dry and wet ash ponds are monitored. HB 136 would also require all new coal ash ponds constructed after January 1, 2014, to include liners that prevent environmental contamination.

The introduction of HB 136 comes on the heels of Georgia Power announcing earlier this year that the company will be closing 15 coal and oil-fired units at plants throughout the state. Georgia Power is taking the units offline to comply with federal rules aimed

at reducing air pollution. While these closures will reduce the amount of coal ash generated in Georgia, it also raises issues concerning the long term storage of existing ash in the closing units.

“This bill is timely and important because Georgia Power is preparing to shut down about half of its coal burners and will have to figure out what to do with their coal ash ponds. This legislation will provide needed direction for Georgia power and further protection of our water,” added Rep. Oliver.

Coal ash is the waste byproduct that remains after coal is burned. It includes fly ash, bottom ash, and boiler slag residue. Coal burning plants typically store coal ash in landfills and surface impoundments, like ponds, pits, or lagoons.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), coal ash contains a broad range of metals, including arsenic, selenium, cadmium, lead, and mercury. While the concentrations of these metals are generally low, the EPA warns that coal ash may cause a risk to human health and the environment if it is not properly managed. The EPA considers proper management to include the use of lined storage units.

Georgia generates over 3.1 million tons of coal ash per year, making it the 13<sup>th</sup> highest generator of coal ash in the country. This coal ash is stored in a total of 28 ponds at 10 power plants throughout the state. According to a 2007 EPA risk assessment, 11 of these ponds are unlined. Of these 11 unlined ponds, 10 do not have leachate collection systems to remove environmentally harmful substances for treatment and disposal, and 9 of the 11 unlined ponds do not have any groundwater monitoring.

For more information on HB 136, please click [here](#).

*Representative Mary Margaret Oliver represents the citizens of District 82, which includes portions of DeKalb County. She was elected into the House of Representatives in 2002, and she currently serves on the Appropriations, Governmental Affairs, Judiciary, Juvenile Justice, and Science & Technology committees.*