

## **AUSTIN PSR JUNE 2010 UPDATE**

### **Membership Report**

Up from 206 to 217 and counting!

### **May PSR Austin Board Meeting**

Board members met May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and discussed the new staff member job description and duties, the year's plans, a presentation with Westlake High School students about the health effects of climate change, and board members' availability and interests. PSR Austin's next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, August 29, 3-5 pm, at Lisa Doggett's and Don Williams's house, 1309 Marshall Lane (78703). Agenda items include: financial status, planning a fall educational event, membership status, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) sunset review activity.

### **Austin PSR Protests Air Permit for Las Brisas Coal Plant**

Lisa Doggett issued a strong request on June 29 to TCEQ to deny the air permit for the proposed Las Brisas Energy Center coal plant, planned for operation inside Corpus Christi city limits. Doggett was joined by speakers from the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, Public Citizen Texas, Alliance for Clean Texas (ACT), and Texas Campaign for the Environment. Here is part of Doggett's statement: "Coal is linked to four of the top five leading causes of death in our state including heart disease and cancer. Air pollution from burning coal leads to tens of thousands of deaths and millions of lost work days each year. The Las Brisas plant, in particular, is a risky proposition given its planned location in an urban area, where more people are likely to be affected by the toxins that would spew from its smoke stacks if allowed to be built." TCEQ remanded the permit back for one more review with administrative law judges, but it is likely to be reviewed and approved, in spite of the fact that many entities believe the permit to be a bad one. Austin PSR will continue its efforts to protect the health of Texans from the harmful effects of coal-burning plants.

### **Austin PSR Participates in a Community Conversation about Children's Health and the Environment**

Children's Optimal Health and the Children's Environmental Health Institute convened a meeting at Dell Children's Hospital on June 28 of stakeholders as part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) initiative to systematically collect concerns of educators, architects, health professionals, and service organization executives across the nation regarding how environmental factors, ranging from food, air, and water to social inequity, violence and isolation affect the health status of children. The information will be compiled and shared with meeting participants and sent on to the CDC for use in developing sound policy and activity planning regarding the health promotion of children.

### **TCEQ Up for Sunset Review – Planning Now, Events Coming Soon**

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulates how much pollution is allowed to enter our air and water, and how we manage the disposal of waste.

Texas's legislative sunset review process happens for most state agencies every 12 years – and it is TCEQ's turn to undergo review in 2011. During this process, the Sunset Advisory Commission assesses the need for the agency, looks for duplicated efforts, and considers changes to the agency's operation to improve its mission and effectiveness. Austin PSR is a partner organization in the Alliance for a Clean Texas (ACT), which is organizing a series of town hall meetings this fall to prepare for public input opportunities in the sunset review process of TCEQ during the upcoming 2011 Texas legislative session. Anyone interested in playing a part in this process through Austin PSR, please contact Marian Morris ([mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org)) or Trish O'Day ([today2@austin.rr.com](mailto:today2@austin.rr.com)).

### **Austin PSR Requests EPA Hold Austin Hearing to Review Coal Ash Regulations**

The EPA will be holding hearings around the country to consider public input in relation to the regulation of coal ash, a waste product of coal burning that is highly toxic – and is the second-largest waste stream in the U.S. (mining waste is first). Austin PSR will be requesting that the EPA hold one of these public input hearings here in Austin, at a place and time convenient to the public. Austin PSR is also coordinating to have other groups around Texas sign on to our request, to increase its volume.

### **“Countdown to Zero” – Movie Premiere Friday, July 30, Arbor Theater**

Come watch a visually engaging, thought-provoking 90-minute film about abolishing nuclear weapons, and join a post-film discussion led by Austin PSR board member Elliot Trester, an Austin family physician. Austin PSR hopes to attract a wide audience to this film, and to encourage people to consider what they think makes sense with regard to the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons. What is the U.S. role in helping rid the world of nuclear weapons? Is it possible, probable, inevitable? Join us and bring your thoughts. More details (exact times and activities) to come in July.

### **1976 Toxic Substances Control Act Reform – Bill in Congress This Summer, Contact Your Representatives**

The Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 proposed bill is making its way through the U.S. House and Senate this summer, with the intent of reforming the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act, which has not really controlled most toxic substances. Austin PSR asks you to call your representatives and request the following amendments to the proposed legislation, in order to give the new law the strong and proper control it needs: phase out the worst chemicals first (like lead and flame retardants), and make sure chemicals are tested for safety *before* they reach the market. More information on the bill process is available through Safe Chemicals, Healthy Families, at [www.saferchemicals.org](http://www.saferchemicals.org).

## **Upcoming Events**

July 30: "Countdown to Zero" film premiere at Arbor Theater Friday evening (specific times TBA)

August 29: Austin PSR board meeting, 3-5 PM Sunday, Lisa and Don's house, 1309 Marshall Lane (78703), all welcome

October 21-22: Children's Environmental Health Institute's (CEHI) annual conference, "Prenatal and Early Life Exposures", Houston [registration open now! [www.cehi.org](http://www.cehi.org)]

October 24: Austin PSR board meeting, 3-5 PM Sunday, Lisa and Don's house, 1309 Marshall Lane (78703), all welcome