

John Katz-Mariani

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My name is John Katz-Mariani. **I lead the Green Team at Congregation Or Shalom in Vernon Hills in Lake County. Our Green Team receives support, guidance and inspiration from Faith in Place. I am also here representing my congregation of 400 families in support of the people of Waukegan, our neighbors.** The Jewish tradition teaches many values, among them: We shall love our neighbors as ourselves; We are all made in the Divine image; and we shall pursue justice whenever and wherever we perceive injustice.

It is unjust that the people of Waukegan, especially the children, our future, have to live in the midst of 5 superfund sites. It is even worse that they have to experience toxins actively leaking into their water from coal ash. **It is not a coincidence that Waukegan is mostly a Latinx and African American community of working people, as this pattern of environmental injustice towards communities of color is repeated all over Illinois and the entire country.** We know that Waukegan can speak for itself. We just want you to know that we stand with this community, that we are aware of what is happening there, and that it is unconscionable to us that anyone would argue for the weakening of any coal ash-related rule that would, if enforced, protect the community now and for the future.

We support the rules for groundwater monitoring, worker protections, and no time-limit monitoring. **However, the rules for clean-up must be firmer and clearer:** no wet ash, wherever it is stored or closed in place; clean-up must be complete such that no ash will have opportunity to be exposed to water; no background wells in areas already impacted by coal ash. **The rules for coal ash prevention should include coal ash landfills and dumps.** Workers and the community must be fully protected from coal ash dust, which requires ongoing monitoring. The rule on cumulative impacts must identify all environmental justice communities in order to fully account for the incremental effects of pollution on vulnerable people. The public must have access to all key documents and be consulted first before any plans are approved. And finally, no rollbacks if federal rules reduce protections.

Like anyone else, we raise our children with the expectation that they must learn to clean up after themselves. When they become adult members of the community, they have internalized the positive feeling and the just nature of not having left a mess for someone else to deal with. Would anyone from any tradition of good faith want their own children to play in or drink from a toxic mess created by adults to whom they have entrusted their lives?