

Senate leader Brightbill, Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee chair White's Dec. 13 letter to Gov. Rendell regarding Growing Greener initiatives.

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Rendell:

We believe recent comments and the growing rhetoric from some in your Administration on the status of various environmental programs to be both uninformed and completely unproductive.

This is particularly true of statements recently made by DEP regarding the agency's ability to assist communities dealing with contaminated sites. While there remain disagreements over your proposal to impose various taxes and fees on businesses and households, we can all agree with the need to ensure adequate funds for cleanup of contaminated sites, particularly those posing an immediate threat to citizens of the Commonwealth.

As we hope you will recall, last year the Senate-passed version of the budget contained a \$10 million infusion for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund (HSCA Fund). This appropriation was removed at the insistence of your budget secretary. Moreover, under Act 89 of 2002 you have the authority to transfer approximately \$34 million to the HSCA Fund should the expected ending balance fall below \$5 million. The legislature has received numerous and wildly varying different 'ending balances' for the fund from your Administration over the past several months. If the expected ending balance is now a deficit of \$14 million, as Secretary McGinty states, we urge you to promptly transfer funds so that emergency relief for communities facing contaminated sites can commence. Several weeks ago, you announced you were utilizing nearly \$38 million in discretionary funds for flood relief. If the perilous condition of the HSCA Fund, as outlined by Secretary McGinty, is accurate, then we suggest this situation is no different.

Secretary McGinty recently said the General Assembly is "failing" the people of Pennsylvania by not passing your bond initiative. Furthermore, in the past two weeks, the secretaries of DEP and DCNR have both publicly stated that the majority caucuses failed to honor a written commitment to try and pass an environmental bond question for the spring primary - even though you should know these statements are not true. The repeated claims from your Administration are that we have irreparably failed the people of Pennsylvania, and broken our word to you. If that is the case, the logical conclusion from many legislators would be to simply agree to disagree over Growing Greener II, and move on to the next issue.

We do not think that is your desire, nor is it ours. We hope that the inflammatory, unnecessary and uninformed rhetoric will cease so that we can commence immediate discussions about both the need to replenish HSCA and, separately, resume the effort to agree to an environmental bond initiative.

Sincerely,

Senator David J. Brightbill, Senate Majority Leader

Senator Mary Jo White, Chairman, Senate Environmental Resources & Energy
Committee