

Statement of Thomas Woodham
Former Member of Lee County Council, Bishopville, South Carolina
Before the House Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on the Environment and Hazardous Materials
United States House of Representatives

July 23, 2003

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Thomas Woodham, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the movement of municipal solid waste between states. As a former member of the Lee County Council, I experienced first hand the closure of our substandard facility and the development of a Subtitle D facility to replace our old landfill.

Lee County is a rural, agricultural community with minimal industrial investment. As such, many agricultural by-products were disposed of in our landfill. In 1988, the State of South Carolina told us we had an environmentally unsafe landfill and that we would have to close it. We made several proposals to develop a new landfill, but each one was rejected by the state. At this time, a private waste company approached the Council and offered to build and manage a waste facility in Lee County. The Council accepted their offer and the Lee County Landfill was developed with the state's blessing.

Today, the Landfill takes in 4,000 tons of waste per day, both from within our borders and outside our state borders. The Landfill is inspected several times a month by state authorities and has never been fined or issued notice of violation nor has it ever been found to pose any danger to the surrounding environment. The Landfill is currently upgrading facilities to convert methane gas to generate electricity cooperatively with the state of South Carolina subsidiary Santee Cooper Electric.

The benefits the County has received from this arrangement with the private waste company include \$1,900,000 in savings on the closure costs associated with the old landfill, free disposal for the County, a rebuilt rail line and more than \$1,200,000 annually in host fees. The total fees and services provided represents roughly 21% of our annual budget. The goal of Lee County Council is to reinvest the revenues of the Landfill improving the quality of life (education, police protection, EMS services, fire protection, etc.) and minimizing the tax burdens on the citizens and local industry. Even during these times of budget shortfalls, Lee County has continued to provide quality services and upgrade its infrastructures without an increase in taxes for six consecutive years. The primary objective of Lee County Council is to improve the infrastructure and better position themselves to attract new industry long after the landfill has reached capacity and closed. Once the landfill is closed, the County plans on turning it into a 1,500-acre park for the citizens of Lee County to enjoy for years to come.

Without the revenues generated by this Landfill, Lee County would not be able to develop the infrastructure necessary to attract new industries without placing the tax burden directly on the citizens and existing industries in Lee County. To further illustrate the financial impact of Lee County, the value of a mill of tax is \$25,300.

The median income in Lee County is \$13,896, which is the lowest in the state of South Carolina. Without the revenue of the Landfill, taxes would have to increase 75.1 mills in order to maintain the same level of services currently being provided. As you can see from the median income, a tax increase of this size or reduction in services provided would severely impact the citizens of Lee County. The Landfill has been a savior for Lee County from an environmental and revenue perspective, and the host community contract between Lee County and the Landfill has been beneficial for everyone involved. Having said this, the savings Lee County has realized in the closing of the old landfill and free disposal and the host fees that they receive from the facility will put tens of millions of dollars into the community by the time the landfill reaches capacity. Lee County would not have been able to generate similar revenues without the Landfill and the fees they receive from accepting out-of-state waste.

I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to inform you of the situation in Lee County. Also, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Lee County Council, along with the County Administrator, have given their full endorsement of the testimony and are willing to answer any questions you may have.

LEE COUNTY



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STATEMENT OF ENDORSEMENT OF TESTIMONY RE: MOVEMENT OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE BETWEEN STATES

We have read and reviewed the attached testimony of Thomas H. Woodham in reference to the above matter and give our full endorsement of the position taken in this matter.

Charles A. Beasley
Charles A. Beasley, Chairman

Date: *July 22 03*

Gordon Eckley
Gordon Eckley, Vice-Chairman

Date: *July 22, 03*

James M. LaCoste
James M. LaCoste, County Administrator

Date: *07/22/03*