

WASHINGTON, D.C.- Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) today spoke with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson regarding yesterday's decision by the Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 to cite BP for alleged Clean Air Act violations at its Whiting refinery.

"The Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that the EPA aggressively enforces the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts and holds polluters accountable for their actions," said Durbin. "I commend Administrator Jackson and the EPA for taking swift action to protect the health of the residents along Lake Michigan and look forward to working with them in the future."

"It's easy to take for granted the air we breathe and the water we drink, but as we all know, these lifelines can become contaminated without careful oversight and dogged enforcement," said Quigley. "Residents who live near our Great Lakes don't deserve to be subjected to environmental injustice, and I commend Administrator Jackson, the EPA, and the Obama administration for making this important issue a priority."

The preliminary findings of violation allege that BP failed to properly manage and treat benzene waste from the facility between the years 2003 and 2008. The facility's report showed that benzene waste was almost 16 times the amount allowed in 2008. BP has 30 days to meet with EPA to discuss resolving these allegations.

Potential health risks associated with benzene include cancer; dizziness; eye, nose, and throat irritation; upset stomach and vomiting; irregular heartbeat; convulsions and death. Benzene can also cause ecological impacts including death to exposed animal, bird, and fish populations and death or reduced growth rate in plant life.