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Your recent editorial position on the dumping of PCB in Warren County demonstrates extremely shallow and shortsighted thinking. What disturbs me the most is the unfounded confidence you place in landfill technology. Just because something is legal does not mean that it is safe. Our government has a notorious history of declaring things to be "safe," only later to discover their harmful effects.

A landfill built adjacent to a Louisiana farm in 1968 was supposed to be "safe." Now the EPA calls it "a carcinogenic stew," and the EPA fears it could threaten the water supply of the 300,000 residents of Baton Rouge. More recently, four EPA-approved landfills built in New Jersey in the last five years, using exactly the same technology that is being used in Afton, were supposed to be "safe." Now they are already leaking, and, as a result, New Jersey has outlawed future hazardous waste dumps within the state.

North Carolina should do the same, because the fact is that hazardous waste dumps have proven without exception to be miserable failures. We simply cannot depend on the safety of current landfill technology, even if landfills are still approved by the EPA.

The only sane, sensible and moral alternative to hazardous waste dumps is detoxification. Although EPA has not yet approved roadside detoxification of PCB, it is monitoring the progress of onsite detoxification of PCB-contaminated soil in South Carolina by a company called Polybac. The preliminary results have been very successful.

Governor Hunt could very easily call a halt to the dumping in Afton for long enough to allow the EPA to get the full data. If the project continues to be successful, the EPA could approve roadside detoxification in a matter of months. The EPA has indicated its willingness to wait. Hunt pushed hard for the rapid completion of the Afton landfill, and this makes Hunt's motives very questionable.

As an environmental, a public health and a moral issue, the current PCB situation is much larger than Warren County, because the problem of disposing of hazardous wastes affects the whole state and nation.

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