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REPORT RELEASE: Billions in Taxpayer and Ratepayer Dollars Funding Dirty Biomass Electricity

A report released today by the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Biomass Accountability Project details how taxpayers and rate-payers are subsidizing hundreds of dirty biomass combustion power facilities through programs intended for clean, renewable energy. The report, ***Biomass Electricity: Clean Energy Subsidies for a Dirty Industry***, analyzes federal and state subsidies for electricity generated by burning “biomass.” It describes why funding biomass burning as so-called “renewable energy” is highly controversial and describes opposition from health, environmental, and fiscal watchdog groups, and local communities. The report lists over twenty facilities cancelled in the last eighteen months due in part to public opposition.

According to the report, burning biomass for electricity emits more carbon dioxide per megawatt of energy produced than fossil fuels and causes air pollution that contributes to asthma, heart disease, cancer and more. “Our nation is demanding fiscal accountability in government programs. Voters don’t want to subsidize a polluting industry that wrongfully calls itself “green,” said Meg Sheehan, spokesperson. “The U.S. Senate recently voted to end all taxpayer subsidies for ethanol biofuels due to its negative impacts. The reasons for ending subsidies for biomass combustion electricity are even more compelling. Congress must keep biomass combustion power out of any future Clean Energy Standard,” added Sheehan.

The report documents various federal taxpayer subsidies including cash grants under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), tax credits, and loan guarantees. It describes how state “renewable portfolio standard” (RPS) programs promote dirty biomass combustion power. “Biomass combustion for electricity should not be in state RPS programs,” said Sheehan. The report says the U.S. already gets about 50% of its so-called “renewable energy” from burning biomass, from about 255 existing facilities. “The industry wants to add another 234 biomass facilities and this is a climate and public health disaster,” said Dr. William Sammons, a pediatrician who has been assisting local communities in understanding health threats from biomass incinerators.

Most biomass facilities are proposed for communities of people of color and working poor around the U.S. –who are already burdened with a disproportionate amount of industrial pollution. “While the biomass industry continues to lobby politicians to give them public handouts, the average American is not so easily duped,” said Ananda Lee Tan, with the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. “Almost every week, another community stands up to successfully stop these expensive, toxic smokestacks from being built in their backyard.”

Conference Call for Media 6/28/2011: 1 p.m. EST Register at:

<http://nobiomassburning.eventbrite.com/>

Report available at 12 p.m. EST 6/28/2011 www.nobiomassburning.org and www.no-burn.org

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