

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2006

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary
Department of Energy
Forrestal Building, Room 7B138
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20585-0800

Dear Mr. Secretary:

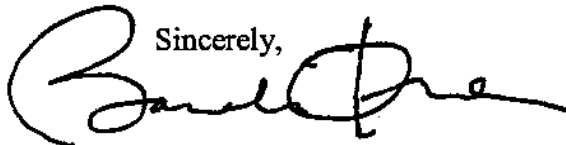
It has come to my attention that the Department of Energy is considering the sale of its surplus stockpiles of mercury. I am writing to request clarification of these reports and to strongly urge the Department not to release these stockpiles into global commerce.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that can cause serious developmental problems in children, ranging from severe birth defects to mental retardation. In adults, mercury also can cause neurological problems affecting vision, motor skills, blood pressure, and fertility. Given that mercury is a trans-boundary pollutant that is deposited both locally and globally, any strategy to reduce mercury in the environment must also include reducing the volume of mercury traded and sold in the world market.

The United States has replaced the intentional use of mercury in manufacturing to a great extent, but most other nations continue to use mercury. In particular, many developing countries do not have adequate pollution controls, waste management policies, or commercial tracking procedures. In those nations where mercury has been replaced, alternatives are used widely – alternatives that are affordable and available in the developing world as well. These alternatives will not be adopted by developing nations, however, as long as mercury remains readily available in worldwide commerce.

Mercury can be safely and permanently stored with no harm to the environment or to public health. I strongly urge the Department of Energy to ensure that mercury stockpiles remain within the possession of the U.S. government.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama
United States Senator