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Alachua County Chapter

Florida League of Conservation Voters

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In this day and age of scientific advancement it is anachronistic to embrace past technologies that have been proven to jeopardize the health of human and other living populations. Over many decades, scientific studies have demonstrated that effluents of coal-fired plant pollutants include sulfur, lead, cadmium and mercury and that these by-products of burning coal adversely affect our lungs, nervous systems, immune systems and more.

For Gainesville to construct a coal-fired electric-generating plant would be to release pollutants that will degrade our air quality. The best of coal-firing plants are subject to potential mechanical failure and human error. One example near home: Some years ago, during a discussion, over a period of many months, whether or not to burn the toxic materials known as PCB's at the city's Deerhaven Plant, it was discovered by citizens that the Lear control console at Deerhaven had been inoperative for some time. Mechanical failure and human error.

The following organizations oppose, as policy, the construction of new coal-fired plants: The American Lung Association, the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Florida League of Conservation Voters, and our local Green-space Preservation Association and Glen Springs Preservation Association. These organizations support strong conservation policies, and the combined use of alternative technologies.

In the early 1970's, the American Institute of Architects published a paper indicating that conservation alone could reduce the energy demand of the American people by 50%. Here, in Gainesville, citizens need to be better educated as to how, when and where they can conserve energy. In addition, the "Green Energy" program of GRU needs to set out clear answers to:
1. What are the specific uses of the money received? 2. What bookkeeping procedures are used to ensure that the funds are sequestered for bona fide clean energy sources? Thus far, these unaddressed questions have prevented large numbers of potential donors from supporting what appears as a vague program to too many citizens.

At this time, we recommend that a committee of independent experts be formed to generate information on conservation and alternative energy technologies. It is premature at this time to recommend any one alternative technology over others. Let us have the data gathered first so that well-grounded community discussion can take place.

Today's newspaper reports that there is pressure on our Gainesville government by those who would profit from lessening citizens' involvement at their City Hall regarding development. It is all the more urgent, therefore, that we ensure careful, expert and independent investigation of the proposal for a new coal-burning plant; and that it be addressed by the entire community of citizens. Every citizen has a stake in the outcome... we all will be breathing the air.