



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Antoine M. Thompson

## Senator Thompson Pushes DEC To Release Local Funding. "Calling on the DEC to honor \$40,000 in grant funding to the Clean Air Coalition."

ANTOINE M THOMPSON | October 28, 2009

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**Buffalo, NY-** New York State Senator Antoine M. Thompson (D-Parts of Erie & Niagara Counties) and Chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee has been assisting the Clean Air Coalition for months in their quest for environmental justice.

The Clean Air Coalition began sampling the air around the industrial area of Tonawanda in 2006 to see if the illnesses they were experiencing were in fact environmental. The DEC eventually came on board and installed air monitors in the Town of Tonawanda and Grand Island. The air study took two long years to be completed and once analyzed; members of the public were told that Tonawanda Coke was the most dominant source of benzene in the area. Since then, Tonawanda Coke has become the focus of an effort to reduce pollutants, particularly the carcinogen benzene.

“This issue is of the utmost important and cannot wait,” stated Thompson. “This community has been burdened with disease causing pollutants for far too long and I do not want to see the Clean Air Coalition’s fight for environmental justice end due to lack of funding.”

The Clean Air Coalition (CAC) of Western New York is a community-based organization that informs and organizes residents to prevent and reduce pollution. The CAC has played a crucial role in informing the community of what they are breathing in the air and why they are getting sick. They have finally reached a point where they have gained recognition and media attention through their persistence and help from elected officials.

Earlier in the year, the Department of Environmental Conservation awarded the CAC a \$40,000 grant which would be paid out in four installments. The first installment was received in the Spring of 2009 but the CAC has yet to receive the additional funding. The DEC is lagging in their contractual obligation to this organization and the citizens of Tonawanda and the surrounding areas are suffering.

Senator Thompson has submitted a letter to DEC Commissioner, Pete Grannis, requesting the immediate release of funding to the Clean Air Coalition for the second installment of the grant.