

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 188

Session of
1982

INTRODUCED BY LLOYD, MORRIS, LASHINGER, KUKOVICH, BROWN,
COCHRAN, FARGO, GREENWOOD, LUCYK, WOZNIAK AND TELEK, MAY 4,
1982

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, MAY 4, 1982

In the House of Representatives, May 4, 1982

1 Sludge is a product of the sewage treatment process and
2 sewage treatment plant operators have an obligation to dispose
3 of that sludge in an environmentally sound way; and

4 Each option for sewage sludge disposal including
5 incineration, burial in a landfill, burial at sea, utilization
6 as an agricultural fertilizer and application to strip mined
7 land, involves certain costs and benefits and poses some risk to
8 the environment; and

9 The land application of liquid and composted sewage sludge,
10 either to fertilize agricultural land or to aid in the
11 reclamation of strip mined land, poses a risk of the spread of
12 viruses and bacteria and a risk that heavy metals will enter the
13 food chain or the water supply in dangerous amounts; and

14 The Federal Environmental Protection Agency and the State
15 Department of Environmental Resources have regulations and
16 guidelines with regard to the maximum amount of sewage sludge
17 which should be applied to land; the manner in which sewage

1 sludge is to be handled, stored and applied to land; and the
2 manner in which that application is to be subsequently monitored
3 in order to minimize any adverse environmental impact; and

4 The regulations and guidelines are based on expert scientific
5 opinion which has been challenged in varying degrees by some
6 other members of the scientific community; and

7 At least one state has imposed a moratorium on the
8 utilization of sewage sludge for agricultural purposes. Several
9 food processors have refused to use food produced on
10 agricultural land to which sewage sludge has been applied.
11 Sewage treatment plant operators in some states are placing
12 increasingly heavy reliance on incineration rather than land
13 application as the environmentally acceptable disposal method;
14 and

15 Such developments in other states and decisions by food
16 processors have increased public skepticism in Pennsylvania
17 about the environmental consequences of the land application of
18 sewage sludge, notwithstanding the alleged benefit of sewage
19 sludge as a cost-effective agricultural fertilizer and as an
20 environmentally effective tool for quick reclamation of strip
21 mined land with the abatement of soil erosion and acid mine
22 drainage; therefore be it

23 RESOLVED (the Senate concurring), That the General Assembly
24 directs the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control
25 and Conservation Committee to conduct, or cause to be conducted,
26 an in-depth investigation of the short-term and long-term
27 environmental and public health consequences of the land
28 application of liquid and composted sewage sludge; the adequacy
29 of the Department of Environmental Resources' regulations,
30 guidelines and monitoring to protect public health and the

1 environment from serious adverse consequences; and the proper
2 steps to be followed if adverse environmental or public health
3 consequences are detected; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the committee may contract with independent
5 scientists for the purposes of conducting all or part of the
6 investigation, provided that before it contracts for the
7 services of a scientist, it carefully scrutinizes the background
8 of the scientist to assure objectivity and freedom from any
9 conflicts of interest; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the committee may hold hearings, take
11 testimony, administer oaths and affirmations to witnesses and
12 conduct inquiries at such places as it deems necessary; and be
13 it further

14 RESOLVED, That the committee report its findings and any
15 recommendations it deems appropriate to the House of
16 Representatives and the Senate as soon as possible.