

**8196:12/92**

**AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON HAZARDOUS, TOXIC AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE<sup>1</sup>**

The recognition of problems from all forms of hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste is of comparatively recent origin. Since the 1940s traditional methods of disposal of chemical waste underground, on the land, in the air, in the rivers or in the seas were followed and considered satisfactory. Even from the beginning of the nuclear age, plans once considered adequate for disposal of high level radioactive waste are questionable.

In 1982, the American Baptist Churches passed a Resolution on the Disposal of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes which called attention to the potential dangers of these hazards. Today the dangers of these poisons have become more and more visible. While there are companies, military facilities and governmental agencies which have tried to dispose of their waste in ways that would keep them from harming persons or the environment, others have continued to follow practices which are dangerous. Although some communities have been enticed by financial gain to allow a dump site or incinerator to operate, these have not been proven safe for the residents. People are being poisoned by substances leaking from dumps and from the incineration of toxic substances, creating as a consequence of these conditions, new health care problems and accelerated health care costs. Glaring injustices emerge when for example, dump sites are deliberately and disproportionately located in the poorest communities.

The Bible provides us with a framework for analyzing the sinful nature of things and activities which pollute creation (Isaiah 24:5-6). Wholeness cannot come to creation unless we repent and turn away from wasteful lifestyles. The sinful state is not cause for hopeless despair. Jesus Christ redeemed us, and calls us to choose life as God's stewards (Romans 5:1-11; Romans 8:12-23; Luke 12:42-48). Through the power of God's spirit each person's life make a difference for good. We claim our responsibility, therefore, to participate in making decisions which affect the well-being of ourselves, our families, and the created order itself.

The General Board of the American Baptist Churches calls on individuals, families, churches and communities to:

1. Recognize that as consumers who use products and services which produce hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste, all of us bear responsibility in preventing and cleaning up the problems of hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste.
2. Challenge and confront denial attitudes that even "state-of the-art" methods of disposal are safe, while in reality they are polluting and poisoning the air, land and water surrounding communities.

3. Encourage legislation that alters industrial production to eliminate waste that cannot be disposed of safely.
4. Insist on the strict enforcement of pertinent laws and regulations so that hazardous wastes are dealt with safely and securely.
5. Support the full implementation of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (Superfund), and similar state legislation to locate and clean up abandoned sites where hazardous materials have been dumped.
6. Encourage legislation and the implementation of a plan for the safe and permanent disposal of radioactive wastes and the transportation of the wastes to the sites selected.
7. Support the strengthening of legislation for community, state, and federal right-to-know laws (as in Superfund Title III).
8. Encourage the recycling of hazardous wastes in order to use them constructively and to keep wastes which must be disposed of to the minimum amount.
9. Encourage the responsibility of people to create a safe and healthy community.
10. Encourage the development and use of nonhazardous substitutes for materials which currently generate hazardous wastes.
11. Support legislative and other efforts to make recompense for damage which has already been done to persons and property from hazardous, toxic and radioactive poisoning.
12. Continue to monitor the corporations in our investment portfolio, encouraging them to go beyond existing legislation and urging them to assume responsibility to end the poisoning of creation through dumping of hazardous and toxic wastes into the air, land or water.
13. Support efforts for national and international agreements and regulations concerning the production, use, and disposal of hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste, including the prohibition of exportation to other states and countries.

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Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - December 1992  
156 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstentions

## **POLICY BASE**

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights

American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology

Ecology and justice are inseparable. The threat to the global environment presents American Baptists with a call for prompt and vigorous response.

As Christians and faithful stewards, we bear the responsibility to affirm and support programs, legislation, research and organizations that protect and restore the vulnerable and the oppressed, the earth as well as the poor.

THEREFORE, we call on members of the American Baptist Churches of the USA to:

2. Acknowledge our responsibility for stewardship of the creator's good earth.
4. Recognize that our practices and styles of life have had an effect on the environment.
6. Exert our influence in shaping public policy and insisting that industries, businesses, farmers and consumers relate to environment in ways that are sensible, healthy and protective of its integrity.
8. Become involved in organizations and actions to protect and restore the environment and the people in our communities.

1 Hazardous - dangerous but not poisonous. Toxic - poisonous.

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