For almost 50 years, the Elmer Smith coal plant has been polluting the air we breathe, making us sick — and it’s right next to our county’s new hospital. Coal pollution leads to smog, which causes chest pain, coughing, and breathing difficulties. Smog makes conditions like bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma worse or even fatal. At least 13 percent of county residents suffer from asthma, and many more suffer from other respiratory and heart problems associated with burning coal, according to a 2013 American Lung Association report. Elmer Smith is not factoring in the high cost of health care into its coal-burning plan — far from it. The owner of the plant, Owensboro Municipal Utility, is contracting to buy coal from a proposed strip mine site in Daviess County, which destroys our air quality and further sickens our community. This plant is old and dirty. Elmer Smith can be replaced with cleaner forms of energy. It’s time to tell Elmer Smith to leave the neighborhood.

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