American Electric Power (AEP) wants you to pay for an expensive coal plant and a storage pond for hazardous coal waste. AEP, with more than 5 million customers in 11 states, wants to sell half of its interest in the Mitchell Power Plant to Wheeling Power, costing the ratepayers of Appalachian and Wheeling Power $580 million over five years (an average increase of $118 per year).

Along with the high price tag, the Mitchell Power Plant comes with a 71-acre pond filled with hazardous coal waste that contains toxic mercury, lead and selenium. AEP expects West Virginia ratepayers to fund the cost of any future damage caused by this waste pond.

Wheeling Power shouldn’t jumping into this short-sighted, costly deal. Instead, the company should find practical solutions, such as energy efficiency, the purchase of other power plants, and continuing to purchase electricity from the grid. West Virginia’s Public Service Commission (PSC), who will decide whether this transfer goes through, should require that AEP create a long-term plan to provide affordable, efficient electricity from diverse sources for West Virginians.

**PROBLEM: MITCHELL IS A BAD DEAL**

American Electric Power is proposing too high a price for the Mitchell Power Plant. Midwest coal plants have seen their value drop by approximately 60% over the past five years. Yet, AEP wants its consumers to buy the Mitchell Power Plant at five times the price of similar coal plants:

**PROBLEM: RISK OF THE COAL ASH WASTE**

In February 2014, a burst pipe at a similar coal ash pit in North Carolina sent 39,000 tons of toxic coal ash and 27 million gallons of contaminated wastewater into the Dan River, threatening drinking water of eight counties downstream and coating the river bottom with toxic sludge for 70 miles. The spill has already cost consumers $15 million in the first two months after the spill with costs expected to rise significantly.

AEP wants to pass the liability for coal ash waste at the Mitchell Plant onto its consumers. Appalachian and Wheeling Power customers would face the costs of cleanup and similar risks to human life and property from the Mitchell Plant coal ash pond—which is listed as a “high hazard potential impoundment” by the U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency. The entire coal ash pond was filled during Ohio Power’s ownership, but AEP wants to pass the cost of potential future damages and cleanup on to West Virginians. We shouldn’t have to pay for Ohio’s waste.

**SOLUTION: INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING**

In 2014, West Virginia passed a law requiring electric utilities to develop integrated resource plans and submit them to the PSC by January 1, 2016. These plans will a five-year outline of how the utility will meet its customers’ electricity needs. Appalachian and Wheeling Power customers should not be asked to fund this transfer until this long-term plan is in place.

**SOLUTION: ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

Energy efficiency is the lowest cost option to ensure the energy needs of Wheeling Power customers are met; it’s also the best option for creating good jobs in our area. A 2012 study by energy consultants Optimal Energy showed that expanding electrical utilities’ energy efficiency programs can create 5,000 – 6,000 jobs in West Virginia per year. Our Public Service Commission should ensure Wheeling Power and other utilities are considering the best options available—including expanding energy efficiency programs.

**SOLUTION: DIVERSIFYING ELECTRICITY GENERATION**

By diversifying its electricity sources in West Virginia, AEP would ensure affordable and reliable power for its customers. In 2013, the Virginia State Corporation Commission denied AEP’s proposal to transfer the Mitchell Power Plant to Appalachian Power, citing a lack of fuel diversity in Appalachian Power’s generation fleet.

The transfer currently being proposed would put West Virginia ratepayers at further risk of price spikes for coal-fired electricity. Rather than putting all of its eggs into one basket, AEP should create a long-term plan to diversify its energy sources and ensure affordable, clean and efficient electricity to West Virginia customers.

**ACTION:**

West Virginia’s Public Service Commission has the power to stop this bad deal for West Virginia ratepayers and instead ensure our utilities serve us better, through long-term planning and energy efficiency.

You can help by telling the PSC to protect ratepayers from this harmful deal and delay it until we see a long-term plan by AEP.

- **Submit a letter to the PSC** asking them to choose lower bills for customers and jobs for West Virginians with a long-term plan that features affordable, clean energy and investments in efficiency.
- **Send a letter to the editor** of your local newspaper and let your community know about the high cost of this bad plan and how diverse electricity and energy efficiency can benefit our communities.
- **Meet with your public officials** to ask them to support lower electricity bills and local jobs by writing a letter calling on the PSC to halt this bad proposal.