MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
2ND DISTRICT, MAINE

WASHINGTON OFFICE
437 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-6306
FAX: (202) 225-2943
www.house.gov/michaud

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
HIGHWAYS, TRANSIT & PIPELINES SUBCOMMITTEE
RAILROADS SUBCOMMITTEE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
RANKING MEMBER

SMALL BUSINESS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RURAL ENTERPRISE, AGRICULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TAX, FINANCE, AND EXPORTS

Statement of Congressman Michael Michaud
Joint Press Conference on EPA Mercury Emissions Rule
March 28, 2005

I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue today. Unfortunately, I cannot be here today to discuss this deeply flawed rule because of a previous commitment.

This Friday is the first day of fishing season. I know that fishermen all over the State of Maine are waiting for Friday and this weekend to get their fishing gear out for another season. And again this year, as in the past, recreational fishermen who fish in Maine's lakes will be unable to feed their catch to themselves and their families.

Mercury has made fish unsafe for children and pregnant women. We have known for years that many fish caught in freshwater posed a risk to our health. EPA itself has stated that one in six American children are born with an unsafe amount of mercury in their blood. We cannot allow it to become normal that we can't eat the fish that we catch in Maine's inland waters.

On March 15th, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a mercury rule that fails to protect the American public from mercury pollution. Instead of regulating mercury under maximum achievable controls – or MACT – as the Clean Air Act requires, EPA essentially allows the industry to go on largely as it has been, endangering the health of many children in Maine. Mercury is a toxin that causes serious developmental problems in children and infants. The EPA has risked its future credibility by turning its back on sound science and abandoning a bipartisan commitment to getting mercury out of the environment. This rule is bad for public health, bad for the environment, and bad for Maine.

Contrary to some claims, creating a much stronger mercury rule is possible, cost-effective, and good for the economy. Enforcing the Clean Air Act and limiting mercury pollution will not end the business of generating power in the Midwest. In fact, when the administration eliminated air pollution controls in 2003, people with high-paying jobs with good benefits were actually laid off because the pollution control equipment they installed was no longer needed.

As ill-conceived as this mercury rule is, perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the rule is the manner in which it was created. EPA's Inspector General's Office has severely criticized the agency over its rule-making process. The rule seems to completely ignore a Harvard University study—paid for and peer-reviewed by the EPA—that shows much greater benefits from reducing mercury emissions than this rule considers. EPA has taken language word for word from industry documents. The creation of this rule was a case of special interest politics trumping public health, plain and simple.

Since the beginning of my time in the House of Representatives, I have been working with my colleagues in Congress to strengthen mercury standards. The Maine delegation has worked together and been strong leaders on this issue. I will continue working with those represented here today and members of both political parties in Congress who care about public health, to ensure that EPA does not give up on its responsibility to protect the health of our children from toxic mercury. EPA cannot continue to roll over and accept the fact that it will always be unsafe to eat fish that we catch in Maine.

LEWISTON:
179 LISBON STREET, GROUND FLOOR
LEWISTON, ME 04240
PHONE: (207) 782-3704
FAX: (207) 782-5330

BANGOR:
202 HARLOW STREET, ROOM 235
BANGOR, ME 04401
PHONE: (207) 942-6935
FAX: (207) 942-5907

PRESQUE ISLE:
445 MAIN STREET
PRESQUE ISLE, ME 04769
PHONE: (207) 764-1036
FAX: (207) 764-1060