

Trash-incinerator bill draws fire

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COLUMBIA — Environmental groups and residents of Chester County said Wednesday that legislation allowing a power-producing garbage incinerator will be an invitation to import trash from other states.

A Senate Medical Affairs panel took testimony on the legislation that New Jersey-based Covanta Energy Corp. said will help the facility make enough money to

be profitable.

The company wants the measure passed quickly so it has time to meet a 2013 deadline to qualify for federal energy tax breaks.

The state limits landfills to incinerating no more than 600 tons of garbage daily.

Covanta wants the limit raised to 1,600 tons because that's the amount it needs to profitably operate its electric generation facility. It wants approval to buy unused daily capacity from other landfill operators.

If it can't generate that stream of trash from 26 South Carolina counties, it would be able to get garbage from North Carolina. And if enough isn't available there, it wants permission to accept it from other states.

The legislation undermines the waste limits the state just agreed to, said Shelley Robbins, project coordinator for the community and environmental group Upstate Forever.

The bill "would open the door once again to out-of-

state waste disposal in South Carolina," Robbins said.

Robbins said garbage is a poor choice for generating power.

"This is not a power plant. It is an incinerator that sell residual power on the side," she said.

The panel took no action on the legislation Wednesday.

That makes it less likely that the legislation will make a procedural deadline at the end of April to clear the Senate and reach the House.