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Superfund Research Center will benefit present, future generations

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When a parent gives a child money to buy something, they know it's possible that the child will buy a toy or some other product that they will play with or use for a day, then discard it never to be seen again. Plenty of parents have winced at this prospect as they hand over the money.

Taxpayers know what that feeling is like. When we send money to a governmental entity – be it local, state or federal – we want that money to be used for the common good. So when that money is spent on an esoteric study that seemingly has no connection to our day-to-day lives, we wince and question the government's ability to allocate funds.

While we tend to focus on the negative, governments can also get it right by funding studies that will no doubt be a boon to present and future generations. That happened Wednesday when it was announced that Glynn County would be the site of the first federally funded Superfund Research Center in Georgia.

Superfund sites are areas of severe environmental contamination often related to the improperly managed handling of hazardous industrial waste. There are currently four active Superfund cleanup sites in Glynn County. With that many Superfund sites in one area, it's easy to see why there is legitimate concern about the potential contamination exposure to people who have lived in the area.

In 2023, Emory University released its findings on a study that examined the industrial contamination in the blood of Glynn County residents. That study found that 40% of people tested had higher concentrations of toxins in their blood associated with the closed LCP Chemicals plant than 95% of Americans. The same study showed that 20% of those tested were above the 95% threshold for a chemical used at the former Hercules site.

Emory University wanted to keep studying the issue, but it needed more funds to do so. It took a few years to secure, but the university will get \$15 million over five years to continue studying the effects of industrial contamination on human and environmental health.

Emory professor Dana Barr, who led the 2023 study, said “the center will translate complex environmental data into practical information that can support healthier decisions for families, clinicians and policymakers.”

We are grateful that the government saw the value in funding this study. It is important that we understand the dangers posed by these chemicals and how we can best mitigate their adverse effects. The work done by this project will help more than the people of the Golden Isles. It will help everyone in the country.

Buyer’s remorse won’t be a problem with this study.