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Wading into the garbage

The message from state Sen. Ken Armbrister to the state's environmental agency and to the parties in a dispute over the disposal of lead-tainted garbage in a Travis County landfill is plain enough: resolve matters or we'll resolve them for you.

Under most circumstances that would be incentive enough to untangle the knots produced by a 1997 wreck on Interstate 35 that dumped a load of TV tubes onto the highway. Of the ill-fated load, 1,600 pounds of it remain in the Texas Disposal Systems landfill near Creedmore.

Efforts by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to resolve a dispute over the appropriate disposal of the waste have fizzled, calling the agency's effectiveness into question. A lawsuit filed by the landfill operator against Penske Truck Leasing has also complicated efforts to resolve the

matter.

At a Tuesday meeting, clearly exasperated members of the Senate's Natural Resources Committee put agency officials on notice that the legislative patience is wearing thin.

The American-Statesman's Kevin Carmody quoted Sen. Mike Jackson, R-La Porte, as saying, "To me, this agency has given up. It's disturbing to me we're in this situation"

That's not what agency board members and executives want to hear from any legislator.

The chairman of the committee, Armbrister, D-Victoria, said he's stepping into the matter.

"I'm happy to sit down with both parties. I will insist on it," Armbrister said.

It's a message that needs no translation, and one that should prompt the agency and the parties to move this matter off center.