

On July 21, 2017 the Oregonian published an article titled "Under industry pressure, state regulators dilute Gov. Kate Brown's clean air plan." Included in the article is a link to an eleven-page letter written by Thomas Wood to the Cleaner Air Oregon Coordinator.

Mr. Wood, an attorney representing timber and manufacturing groups, wrote that the Cleaner Air Oregon rule-making process is being formulated at breakneck speed and should be slowed down. It is not; regulating toxic air emissions is progressing at a snail's pace.

One of Mr. Wood's statements is that "there is no reason to believe that there's a health crisis in Oregon around industrial air toxics." The accidentally discovered level of toxic air around the decorative glass companies shows that there are likely air problems that have not been discovered because the air monitoring is absent or inadequate.

Another assertion by Mr. Wood is "employment is the best indicator of a community's health." The coal towns of West Virginia would be an example which counters that idea. Mr. Wood is writing to protect the industrial profits of the companies he, as an air permit attorney, and his organizations represent. On every point he makes he goes against health as the primary driver. Either health will be, or it won't be, the primary driver.

I emailed Art Williams who was the Air Regulator in Louisville Kentucky. He said that health was the primary driver in Louisville. Williams emailed to me, "In our experience, the economy isn't hurt by protecting health. In fact you strengthen it. Louisville has not lost a single job as a result of our toxics program. My only thought in response to his [Wood's] ludicrous comment that the state is moving at breakneck speed is my favorite joke--the turtle joke. A snail and a turtle collided at an intersection. The investigating officer asked them what happened. The turtle said, "I don't know - it all happened so fast." I guess Einstein was right. I tend to think the state is moving at a snail's pace."

Environmental improvements create jobs - not the opposite as Wood states. I oppose the "benchmark" of 500 cancers in a million that Wood also proposed. That would be far too many cancers allowed by DEQ regulations. In making public comment before the Environmental Quality Commissioners I implored the Commissioners to use their authority to direct the DEQ to keep health as the primary driver in the writing of Cleaner Air Oregon rulemaking. The DEQ has previously failed to regulate and has allowed businesses to pollute over their permits for too long. This must be a high priority, with strong regulations based on health and full compliance from industries.

To read more about Art Williams comments, copy and paste "Gov. Kate Brown's clean air plan wouldn't clean Oregon's air until 2030."

Please click on the attachment to read in more detail my Comment on Cleaner Air Oregon Rulemaking. The link is at the bottom left of the page.