

Testimony for Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Sunset Hearing

By Dr. Madeleine Crozat-Williams

Subject: Air pollution and lung disease. Need for better regulation by TCEQ and a new way to choose the commission.

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My name is Dr. Madeleine Crozat-Williams. I live in Houston and I consider it so important to be here today that I have found a friend to keep my retail gallery open for me.

I have reactive airways disease and I speak for myself and many others who suffer from chronic lung problems. The TCEQ is not regulating our oil, chemical, and coal-burning industries forcefully enough to reduce pollutants to a safe level. Air pollution, including SO₂, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and volatile organic compounds (VOC), is common from the industries on the Houston Ship Channel and in other industrial areas of the state. The same chemical pollutants are created by the combustion of coal and pet coke by coal-powered generating plants. A greater risk of lung disease and asthma and heart disease is statistically linked to these chemical pollutants. I, for one, did not develop reactive airways until I had lived in the Houston area for more than a dozen years. On mornings when wind is blowing from the ship channel area, it is definitely more difficult for me to breathe because my reactive airways become constricted. Risks to the elderly and small children are higher. In the case of infants and small children, their lung cells are multiplying very rapidly and this results in an accumulation of more pollutants in the lung cells.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality needs to concentrate on enforcing federal environmental standards rather than on making it easy for large industries to operate in a manner that endangers the public. I am a taxpayer and want the TCEQ to work for me. The TCEQ does not have the right to compromise my health.

The composition of the commission needs to be changed to reflect public demand.

Representatives from the public need to be included on the commission, including a board member representing children, a board member representing the elderly, and a board member representing “at risk” communities close to polluting industries. These members need to have the right to veto a permit grant. The public must have a voice in the actions of the TCEQ!

As it functions now, the TCEQ is not protecting our human resources OR working for sustainable development. As it operates currently, the TCEQ is not in conformance with its mission statement. This needs to be corrected immediately.

Madeleine Crozat-Williams