

**Sunset Commission Hearing: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality,
December 15, 2010**

I'm Trish O'Day. I am a nurse here in Austin, and the Co-President of Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility, a local chapter of the national organization Physicians for Social Responsibility.

I am here today to speak on behalf of "health", the health of the public. I believe that TCEQ has not kept health foremost as the priority issue when considering the many environmental dilemmas facing Texas.

I teach public health nursing at our university here in Austin. I thought it might help to review some of the basics---Environmental Health 101.

How do Texans come in contact with environmental hazards that harm their health? There are only 3 routes of exposure: breathing, ingesting or dermal (absorbed through the skin). And the exposure pathways are air, water, soil and food. This is where the TCEQ's mission of "clean air, clean water and safe management of waste" comes into play for protecting the health of the public.

Unfortunately I don't think TCEQ is keeping our air clean, with repeated permitting of polluting coal plants across our state. Coal plants emit numerous toxins such as particulate matter and mercury, which are linked to death and disease.

TCEQ states that to accomplish their mission -they will base decisions on the law, common sense, good science and fiscal responsibility. In public health, we use the Precautionary Principle, which might be considered "common sense". If all indications are that a toxin or hazard is probably harmful to health, then it makes sense to limit our exposure and our children's exposure to this hazard.

And we have the "good science", scientific research that tells us that kids who live in towns with many ozone action days will develop asthma, not just have their existing asthma flare up, but cause asthma.

And I can't think of anything more fiscally responsible than to prevent disease: much cheaper to prevent lung disease and heart disease and asthma and harm to a child's nervous system than treat these diseases and to provide decades of disability payments to persons who can not work.

If TCEQ can not protect our health, from environmental harm, who will? Please ensure that the mission of TCEQ truly does protect the health of the public.