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**Clearing the Air on Pollution Control Legislation
By Joseph Koncelik, Director, Ohio EPA**

After much debate, the Legislature passed a bill that streamlines regulations for minor sources of air pollution. The goal was to make Ohio more competitive in attracting and retaining jobs. The complexity of this bill has left many Ohioans confused about its impact on air quality. The fact is Ohio's air is much cleaner than in the past. Furthermore, even critics of the bill agree that air quality will continue to improve significantly under new programs Ohio is developing separate from this legislation. Here are the impacts of the bill, as I see it.

Why change the law?

Business groups argued that current requirements for small pollution sources impede economic growth. Many people have valid concerns about changing environmental regulations to encourage business development. In this case, changing some rules can help the environment and business. Complex, outdated or unpredictable rules can hamper Ohio EPA's ability to achieve environmental goals. By making it easier for businesses to understand and follow our rules, Ohio EPA can do a better job of protecting the environment and spend more time on the most serious problems.

Will Senate Bill 265 weaken Ohio's air pollution control laws?

Minor sources of air pollution include auto body shops, dry cleaners, bakeries, printers and other small businesses. The bill will relax some requirements for these minor sources. I supported these changes because I believe Ohio over-regulates minor sources with little environmental benefit. We can be more effective in improving air quality by reducing emissions from more significant sources of pollution.

The legislation actually makes Ohio EPA's authority over toxic emissions stronger, not weaker. Ohio EPA restricts the release of nearly 500 toxic compounds. Business groups pushed to limit our authority to 187 toxic compounds regulated at the federal level. This bill allows Ohio EPA to regulate any toxic compound we believe can harm people or the environment, providing significant protection for the public.

Does the bill exempt some polluters from regulation?

Contrary to what critics say, no air pollution sources are exempt from regulation under the bill, which applies only to new or expanding businesses. New minor sources will not be required to install the best pollution controls available anywhere, but they will have to use the same controls that similar businesses in Ohio use today. Slightly higher emissions may result from these minor sources using good controls rather than the very best controls. This will be more than offset by strong future programs that will reduce emissions from more significant sources. This bill does not change requirements for larger air pollution sources.

Bob Taft, Governor
Bruce Johnson, Lieutenant Governor
Joseph P. Koncelik, Director

Will it be harder for counties that don't meet federal air standards to comply?

The federal government sets national outdoor air quality standards to protect public health. Ohio's air met those standards until recently, when the federal government significantly tightened the national standards for fine particles and ozone. Thirty-three Ohio counties don't meet the tougher standards. Ohio EPA will propose strong new pollution control programs to attain the new standards. Emission reductions from these efforts will far surpass any pollution increases that would result from this legislation. As a result, Ohio's air quality will continue to improve significantly in the coming years.

There has been more rhetoric than clarity about the potential impact of Senate Bill 265 on Ohio's air quality. I hope this explanation puts the issues in context for Ohioans.