

TO: NC Division of Air Quality, a resident's position against the issuance of a permit to Titan Cement

Dear Mr. Butler,

This letter addresses my strong opposition to any accommodations made by the state to assist the Greek cement multinational Titan, operating here under their charmingly deceptive "Carolinas Cement" moniker. This project is "the tipping point" with respect to coastal NC's identity and competitiveness in the NOW and NEXT economy. We cannot allow the narrow, self-serving financial interests of a handful of powerful operators to drag our economy backwards, with a "pollution-haven" culture that will destroy the economic advances of the past 20 years, ignoring the data-driven analysis that overwhelmingly favors protecting, not harming, our air quality any further.

The ethical and moral argument for something as fundamental as Air Quality is compelling, but without a financial imperative in our economically motivated world, it would appear to count for little.

Air Pollution is the enemy of Air Quality---and a commitment to great air quality is a competitive regional economic advantage. In current economic development best practices, NC cities (Greenville, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham, etc.) as well as port cities in other Southeastern US states (Charleston, Savannah etc.) tout their air quality scores as a "selling point" in their widely published and frequently updated "economic scorecards." Wilmington, by contrast, is embroiled in sensitive negotiations with the EPA to avoid the severe economic blow of air quality non-attainment status, illustrating how insane it is to even be *considering* this titanic cement monument to crony capitalism. This is tragic, especially given our soaring potential, and growing momentum of pre-recession successes!

The Wilmington MSA was one of the few metro regions in the nation to more than double in population from 1990-2010. Why? Technology conquered distance, and people moved here *because they could*, the unique differentiator our incalculably valuable confluence of ocean, river, ICWW and mild weather. Locked in competition with savvy knowledge, creative, and high-value, export-centric manufacturing economy campaigns in places like Charleston and Savannah, the murky and comparably backwards practices of our own regional economic development regime should be completely investigated before another "favor" is granted to Team Titan.

The economic theory of market failure occurs when the cost of production are not borne by producers, but are by the environment, public health and others businesses. Negative economic externalities occur where there are significant social costs or benefits from production or consumption that are not reflected in the economic impact studies commissioned by polluting companies. The best example of negative externalities from high-polluting companies is best exemplified by the previously mentioned threat of the EPA's non-attainment designation, which would trigger an economically devastating impact to the entire region.

The exemplary NH County Commissioner Rick Catlin recently said: "If we add additional sulfur dioxide sources, the existing industries will have to make further reductions, adding, "It's not helpful to add a new source while we're negotiating with the EPA...the days of smokestack recruitment in New Hanover County are over." As Mr. Catlin explains, "If we build a new smokestack on one end of the county, we might be closing another on the other end. That's going to hurt jobs," Catlin said. Also, building a new coal-burning plant "compromises our moral high ground," Catlin said. My agreement with Mr. Catlin is complete. In a world where politicians wield power, and have it compromised by the pay-for-access system in the United States, it is crucial for NC to get this one right, defending our regional identity to be more competitive and relevant in the 21st century global economy.

I'll conclude with the words of President Richard Nixon from his 1970 State of the Union address, one-third of which was devoted to an array of environmental considerations (including economics), calling the protection of human health and the environment, "as fundamental as life itself". Nixon said, "Americans can't afford to consider air and water common property, free to be abused by anyone without regard to the consequences to public health. We are no freer to contaminate the air, water and land than we are free to throw garbage into our neighbor's yard."

Even when we go back forty years ago to the formation of the EPA, strong leadership understood to protect the air as an economic development imperative! NC and the Wilmington MSA must follow this common sense approach to our economic prosperity.

Tom Looney 1215 Pembroke Jones Drive Wilmington NC 28405 (910) 262-4679