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Senate President Steve Morris Cites Politics in KDHE's Denial of Sunflower Electric's Application for a Construction Air Permit at Holcomb

TOPEKA – Senate President Steve Morris (R-Hugoton) issued a statement expressing disappointment with Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Secretary Rod Bremby for denying an application by Sunflower Electric Corporation for an air quality permit for the company's expansion of its Holcomb plant in southwest Kansas.

Morris said, "I am extremely disappointed that KDHE Secretary Bremby has ignored the recommendation of his own staff and has denied Sunflower Electric's application for the air quality permit. The expansion at Holcomb could benefit the entire state in a number of significant ways. However, by giving in to pressure from ill-informed but vocal opposition, Secretary Bremby has derailed this \$4 billion project. Kansas – particularly rural Kansas – needs the jobs and economic development that would have been associated with this project!"

"There would appear to be major problems in an application process that takes more than a year and a half. Clearly, there is a disconnect between the professional staff of KDHE and the political leadership of the agency. Rest assured the Electric Generation Review panel will continue to carefully examine this process to determine what might be done to make it more responsive and efficient."

"This politically motivated decision is not consistent with the outcome of the agency's own review of the application. It is devastating to Kansas' energy future. We had an opportunity to be a leader in environmentally friendly energy production with the bioenergy system associated with the Holcomb plant. This will have a huge impact on hundreds of thousands of Kansans."

“I am disappointed in the Governor’s lack of support and leadership for western Kansas on this major development project. I am hopeful this effort will not live or die on Secretary Bremby’s decision.”

Morris serves as chairman of the Legislative Coordinating Council (LCC), and is a member of the newly created Electric Generation Review Panel. The Electric Generation Review panel is charged with examining the application process implemented by KDHE for issuance of air quality permits. The panel plans to review the standards used to determine whether a permit should be issued. In addition to receiving a report on the status of the Sunflower Electric Corp. application, the panel will make recommendations for changes, if necessary, in the Kansas Air Quality Act.

Sunflower Electric filed its air permit application to expand the Holcomb Station with KDHE in February of 2006. KDHE reviewed the application extensively, including three public hearings in Fall 2006 and responses to public concerns. At the first meeting of the Electric Generation Review panel, Secretary Bremby of KDHE admitted his staff, having ensured state and federal environmental laws were followed, public health was being protected and public concerns addressed, had recommended approval of the Sunflower application. Sunflower’s air quality permit – had it been approved – would have been one of the most restrictive ever issued in the United States.

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