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SAGINAW -- Democratic gubernatorial nominee Jennifer Granholm said today that her administration would make protection of family health from pollution a cornerstone of state environmental policy. After meeting with citizens concerned about the recent disclosure of high levels of dioxin contamination along the Tittabawassee River in Saginaw County, Granholm and her running mate State Senator John Cherry (D-Clio) said the state should do more to answer their concerns and to provide more transparency in state government when dealing with environmental contamination that poses health risks.

"There is a definite lack of governmental accountability here," Granholm said, speaking at the Greenpoint Nature Center in Saginaw. "When I am Governor, my administration will operate differently. We will inform residents quickly regarding any health threats, and there will be a code of conduct for state government to follow in these situations."

"Residents of the contaminated areas are suspicious of the state's commitment to protecting them," Cherry said. "That's because the state has failed to communicate openly with them and because the state did not respond aggressively on their behalf when dioxin was first found. What the current Administration has forgotten is that families have a right to know about pollution in their community - our administration will defend that right."

Last week, the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) disclosed that soils in public parks and other areas along the Tittabawassee River in Saginaw County have dioxin levels as much as 20 to 30 times above what the state considers safe for residential areas for long-term exposure. Dioxins are a family of chemical compounds created as unwanted byproducts of manufacturing and incineration processes and are considered among the most dangerous chemicals known.

Granholm said the environmental policies of state government the last 12 years have wrongly assumed that protecting public health and the environment is incompatible with job creation.

"I deeply believe in the idea that Michigan not only can, but must pursue economic development that is good for our own health and for the environment," she said. "I reject the assumption of the current management of the DEQ that leveling with the public about dioxin and other pollution problems is somehow bad for business. To demonstrate my commitment to a new approach, I'll be reorganizing the DEQ when I take office - beginning with a new director who agrees that economic and environmental health are the flip sides of a single coin."

"Our aim here is clear. The residents of this region should not held hostage by the inaction of DEQ management," Cherry added. "When you find dioxin levels at 20 to 30 times the acceptable standard, we must do more to address the problem, it's that simple. Our administration will act openly and responsibly to help families facing these situations."

Granholm said the campaign's detailed environmental platform (available on the campaign's web site at <http://www.granholmforgov.com>) contains a commitment to openness in government and the protection of family

environmental health, including:

- Creation of a citizen board to operate the DEQ and to hold hearings and take public input on proposed pollution permits, rules, and policies;
- A plan to phase out the use and release of the most dangerous chemicals, including dioxins, in Michigan;
- Signing of an executive order putting protection of children's health at the center of proposed new rules and permits;
- Expansion of data available to citizens on toxic chemical use by industry, pollution conditions at public beaches, and business and municipal compliance with environmental statutes; and
- Signing of a right-to-know compact among the Great Lakes states enabling citizens to measure environmental performance and progress by the eight states.