

# Clean Air Act Reauthorization

## STATUS REPORT for Senators

May 17, 1982

### SENATE COMMITTEE WORKS ON COMPROMISE

During the past several months, the Senate Environment Committee, under the leadership of its chairman, Senator Stafford, has been working to construct a consensus bill to amend the Clean Air Act. The Committee has taken two important strides in the past two months toward completing action on the bill.

The Committee may complete action on the Clean Air Act in late June. It must still wrestle with such complex issues as control of cancer-causing toxic pollutants, acid rain, and pollution controls on power plants.

### PROTECTING CLEAN AIR

First, the Committee approved a compromise package of revisions to the program which protects clean air regions. The Hart-Domenici package was approved by a vote of 15-1, with only Senator Symms dissenting. The National Clean Air Coalition opposed the amendment, arguing that it gives Governors too much authority to remove portions of their states from the Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) program.

**NATIONAL  
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-2-

Specifically, the amendment permits any Governor to remove moderate clean air budgets (Class II areas). The Governor must act within 18 months after the President signs the bill into law. In addition, the amendment eliminates "tracking" of the cumulative impact of new pollution sources in all Class II regions. This amendment goes beyond the fine-tuning that this program may have needed.

This amendment does retain the Clean Air Act's tough protection for large national parks and wilderness areas.

#### CLEANING UP DIRTY AIR

Second, the Committee approved a Stafford-Bentsen package of amendments to the program which cleans up regions of the country with unhealthy air. The amendment passed 13-0.

The committee amendment clarifies flexibility in the current law which allows new pollution sources in areas where the air is still unhealthy. New pollution sources either must find offsetting reductions in existing pollution, or states must adopt an equally effective alternative program.

The Committee also agreed to extensions for those few cities that are expected to have especially severe problems meeting current clean-up deadlines. Inspection programs for automobiles will be limited to cities with especially severe automobile pollution problems.

New pollution sources in dirty cities would have to continue to use state-of-the-art control equipment. The construction ban for failing to comply with the Clean Air Act was repealed and replaced with a requirement for significant reductions in pollution from older plants.



-3-

### DIRTY AIR FOR WEST

Senator Jake Garn and six Western colleagues have introduced Clean Air Act amendments which will produce dirty air in the West. The bill would allow heavy, and highly concentrated, new doses of pollution for our national parks and other park lands. It would disrupt the program for protecting air which is now clean, and allow massive new doses of sulfur dioxide in the West by extending clean-up deadlines for smelters until 1993 and by allowing new coal-fired power plants to be built without pollution control equipment. The National Clean Air Coalition opposes the Garn bill.

The last provision, which repeals the Clean Air Act's "percentage reduction" requirement, reveals the short-sighted nature of the Garn plan. Removing this provision would triple sulfur dioxide from new power plants. Western air, now the cleanest in the country, would be degraded and the West's exceptional visibility would be lost. With the center of American electric power production moving west, the problem of acid rain will certainly move west as well. The cheapest, easiest time to install controls is at the time plants are being built. Not doing so amounts to mortgaging our future.

Those Western senators cosponsoring the bill are: Orrin Hatch, Steve Symms, James McClure, Barry Goldwater, Paul Laxalt, and Quentin Burdick.

### DIRTY AUTOMOBILES

Senators Riegle and Levin have introduced a bill which would double emissions of harmful pollutants from new automobiles. Specifically, the bill relaxes tailpipe standards for carbon monoxide from 3.4 grams per mile to 7.0 grams per mile, and



nitrogen oxides from 1.0 grams per mile to 2.0 grams per mile.  
The National Clean Air Coalition opposes the Riegle-Levin bill.

Studies by the National Governors Association and the National Clean Air Coalition reveal that these changes will result in extensive delays for achieving healthy air in many urban areas. Millions of Americans would be forced to breathe unhealthy levels of air pollution for the rest of this century.

#### BYRD INTRODUCES WEAKENING BILL

Senator Robert Byrd has introduced a bill which would weaken the Clean Air Act substantially. Senator Byrd's bill closely parallels Representative Dingell's, H.R. 5252. But the the Byrd bill does not amend the portions of the Clean Air Act which control auto emissions. The National Clean Air Coalition opposes the Byrd bill.

The Byrd Bill will:

- \*extend for up to a decade deadlines for achieving healthy air;

- \*eliminate many of the tools for cleaning up unhealthy air, sentencing millions of Americans to breathe more dirty air;

- \*do nothing to control acid rain-causing pollution; and,

- \*do nothing to control cancer-causing hazardous air pollutants.

Cosponsors of the Byrd bill are: Senators Eagleton and Ford.



-5-

CLEAN AIR ACT AND ELECTIONS

Pollster Lou Harris reports that a massive pro-clean air swing vote could affect results in as many as 100 congressional districts this year.

In all, 45% of voters nationwide say that a congressional candidate's voting record on the Clean Air Act would probably or certainly affect their vote for that candidate this fall. Only 6% said that they would probably or certainly vote against a candidate that has supported a strong Clean Air Act.

Of those voters who are certain that a candidate's record on clean air would affect their vote, 14% would support the pro-clean air candidate, while only 2% would vote against him/her. Harris argues that this massive 12% net swing vote "means that no less than control of Congress itself is at stake on the clean air issue alone."