
THE STATUS OF CLEAN AIR LEGISLATION

Congress first approved the cornerstone of our environmental bill of rights, the Clean Air Act, in 1970 and amended it in 1977. Authorization for these clean air programs expired on September 30, 1981. Committees in both houses are now holding hearings and working on several sets of amendments. The Sierra Club has always supported a strong and effective Clean Air Act. We will continue to do so as Congress rewrites the act during the upcoming year.

The Reagan "Principles" on the Clean Air Act

The Sierra Club vigorously opposes the 11 "principles" announced in August by the Reagan Administration. These principles are vaguely worded to avoid public criticism, but, when deciphered, constitute radical proposals to gut the Clean Air Act. If adopted, the Reagan "principles" would weaken health protection for the millions of Americans who are susceptible to air pollution, increase destructive acid rain, cloud western skies, and double automobile pollution. The Sierra Club urges Members of Congress to reject the Reagan proposals.

The Threat to Public Health of the Traxler Bill

The Sierra Club opposes legislation introduced by representatives Traxler and Hillis. This bill, H.R. 4400, would destroy the program to control dangerous pollution from automobiles. In many cases, this auto industry "wish list" goes beyond what even the Reagan Administration is proposing. Most importantly, the major auto companies admit that it will not help the auto industry and will not put any auto workers back to work. The Sierra Club urges Members of Congress not to co-sponsor or support this legislation in any way.

Negative Public Reaction to Broyhill Bill

The Sierra Club has opposed the legislation H.R. 3471, introduced by Representative Broyhill, the ranking minority Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. This proposal also assaults the basic foundation of the Clean Air Act -- the national health standard. Introduction of the bill has generated a storm of public protest, and Representative Broyhill has directed a committee minority staff to redraft certain portions of the bill.

Senate Acid Rain Bill

Eight senators, led by Senator George Mitchell, have introduced a bill, S.1706, to control the pollution that causes acid rain. The Sierra Club supports this bill. It is an excellent first step in attempting to control acid rain, but must be considered the minimum action that the Congress should take in controlling the pollutants that are causing billions of dollars of damage in the United States and Canada. The Sierra Club urges senators to co-sponsor this acid rain legislation; action to control the pollution which causes it must be taken now.

Looking to the Future

With the exception of Senator Mitchell's proposals, no bills have been introduced which "fine tune" the Clean Air Act, despite rhetoric from all sides that that is what they desire. If real "fine tuning" proposals are not advanced, the Sierra Club will continue to oppose vociferously major weakening changes. Such controversy will inevitably delay consideration of any changes in the Clean Air Act until at least 1982.



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