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United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 101<sup>st</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 136

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1990

No. 149—Part II

## Senate

Mr. GORE. Mr. President, I rise to commend our majority leader, Senator MITCHELL, and my colleagues Senators BAUCUS, CHAFEE, and DURENBERGER for their tireless efforts in crafting the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments. Recognizing we must act now—to protect our environment, to ensure the health and well-being of our children—our colleagues have met the challenge and provided critical leadership on issues essential to our future. Thirteen years of failed attempts to amend the Clean Air Act are truly a testimony to the magnitude of their accomplishment today.

Mr. President, since the passage of the first Clean Air Act Amendments in 1970, much progress has been made. Urban air quality in the United States has improved in many respects—sulfur dioxide and particulate concentrations have declined in most cities, and the United States can take great pride in having reduced airborne lead concentrations.

However, as those who worked to improve the Clean Air legislation recognized, many challenges remain. Twenty years after the first Clean Air Act amendments, more than 100 cities still are polluted with unhealthy concentrations of ground-level ozone and carbon monoxide. Concern over the health impacts of urban ozone grows with every new study released—we now know for example, that children playing outside in the summer are among those most at risk. There's work to be done in controlling chemi-

cals that deplete “good”—stratospheric—ozone and acid rain—problems that were not even recognized when the 1970 Clean Air Act amendments were passed. And, we have just started to grapple with the health and environmental hazards posed by the soup of hundreds of toxic chemicals that our industrial society continuously generates.

Mr. President, I believe that the 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act will take us far in dealing with these persistent problems. Recognizing that the loss of our protective ozone shield poses a terrible threat to all life on Earth, these amendments will phase out and eventually ban many ozone destroying chemicals. I am proud to have been able to contribute to this effort. Together with my distinguished colleague from Vermont, Senator LEAHY, we worked to ensure that HCFC's—hydrochlorofluorocarbons—are used only temporarily as we develop refrigerants and solvents that are not destructive to the ozone layer, and that, in replacing ozone-eaters, we choose substances that offer maximum environmental and health benefits. The United States can be very proud in having taken the lead in this area. I am told that our actions greatly impressed negotiators at the latest working sessions on the Montreal Protocol and catalyzed the passage of an international resolution to phaseout HCFC's.

These amendments will also bring under control some of our most toxic

air pollutants. Large industries, small businesses, and a myriad of our own daily activities contribute to the emission of hundreds of tons of air toxics every year. The toll these chemicals take on our health and well-being cannot be overestimated. In cancer incidence alone, air toxics are responsible for some three thousand cases each year. Industry wanted to solve this problem by moving people away instead of stopping or reducing the pollution. They wanted to be allowed to pollute, and in the process, create "dead zones" surrounding industrial plants. I thank my colleagues for standing firm with me in rejecting the arguments of industry; in demanding that industry use the technology it can and must use; and in protecting and preserving our neighborhoods and communities.

The Clean Air Act amendments also attempt to address the air quality problems caused by our collective addiction to driving. In setting minimum oxygen content requirements for gasoline, the amendments will help areas that have failed to meet health and safety standards for carbon monoxide; by limiting the amount of volatile organic compounds that can be used in gasoline, the problem of urban smog and the incidence of cancers caused by auto emissions will be reduced.

But, we need to keep in mind that reformulated gasoline will not solve all our problems. As with earlier amendments to the Clean Air Act, progress achieved by cleaning up gasoline can and will be overwhelmed by the ever increasing number of cars on the road and by the increasing distances we travel. Moreover, while some of the gas additives that meet the requirements of the amendments are effective in combatting some air quality problems, their widespread use can

cause or worsen other problems. Methanol, for example, is effective against carbon monoxide, but the jury is still out on the question of its effectiveness against smog—some studies say that it could worsen the problem. And, should methanol be derived from coal, it will significantly enhance the greenhouse effect and the problem of global warming. Ethanol also is not a complete solution. Although it, too, will help to control carbon monoxide, ethanol production is quite costly, and often is dependent on farm products that are particularly chemical-intensive and erosive. And we need to remember that, in merely reformulating gasoline, we will never free ourselves from the petroleum dependence that increasingly threatens our security and jeopardizes world peace.

To effectively combat the health and environmental problems caused by automobiles, and to achieve for ourselves some degree of energy security, our campaign must be twofold. First and foremost, we must decrease the amount we drive by breaking our habit of "going it alone," and second, we must work toward the development of a whole new generation of energy sources—biomass, photovoltaics, wind, geothermal. In so doing, we will not only preserve and protect our environment and improve air quality, but we may also free ourselves from our crippling dependence on petroleum. The Clean Air Act amendments start us on that course, and we must take advantage of the opportunity to continue our move forward.

Mr. President, these amendments chart a new and exciting course for our country, and I congratulate my colleagues who have worked so long and hard to bring us this truly historic legislation.



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