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Comparison of Clean Air Bills

Congress will consider three sets of bills in 1990 that would reauthorize the Clean Air Act: the Senate Environment Committee bill, S. 1630; the Bush-Dingell bill, H.R. 3030; and the Waxman-Lewis Smog and Leland Air Toxics bills, H.R. 2323 and H.R. 2585. The following section is a side-by-side comparison of these bills that identifies which provisions hold the best promise for clearing the nation's air.

Sierra Club
JANUARY 1990



SENATE AUTO PROVISIONS ACHIEVE MORE SMOG REDUCTIONS

Generally, the Senate provisions regulating emissions from gasoline powered cars, buses and trucks would achieve greater reductions in carbon monoxide (CO), hydrocarbons (HC), and nitrogen oxides (NOX) (HC and NOX are the chief components of ozone smog). In addition, these reductions would occur sooner. Motor vehicle emissions are the number one source of urban smog. The swiftest, steepest reductions are needed to achieve healthful air for millions of Americans.

The Senate motor vehicle provisions have the following advantages over the House provisions.

- * The first round of auto tailpipe emission reductions are required sooner.
- * The first round of auto tailpipe standards are much tougher because cars have to meet the standards "in use" (on the road) as well as in test labs. The in use compliance requirement assures that new cars will start out cleaner and stay cleaner over the years. This is critical for achieving clean air by the year 2000 in Cleveland, Dallas, Washington, and many other cities.
- * The second round of tailpipe reductions are not mandatory in either bill. However, these reductions are more likely to take effect under the Senate bill because they are triggered based on the number of cities still violating health standards by the end of the decade. The House bill allows EPA and OMB to decide whether additional reductions should be required, based on technical feasibility, cost, and need. A second round of tailpipe emission reductions is needed in the 21st century to offset smog from the increase in cars and traffic.
- * CO emissions from new cars starting in cold weather would be 70 percent lower by the year 2000 under the Senate bill. This stricter "cold start" standard is especially critical for Denver, Salt Lake City, Minneapolis, and other western and northern cities.
- * Controls on evaporative emissions from engines would be implemented sooner.
- * "On-board canisters" to trap vapors from refueling systems have a firmer implementation deadline.
- * Emissions of particulates from diesel buses -- a probable human carcinogen, according to EPA -- would be reduced two years sooner.
- * "Middle weight" trucks (5700-8500 pounds) would have lower emission standards under the Senate bill.
- * The Senate bill would not preempt states from regulation emissions from off-road engines and farm vehicles. The House bill does preempt such state laws.
- * Reductions in emissions from heavy trucks would be written into the law, while the truck standards in the House bill could be weakened by EPA and OMB.

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." *John Muir*
National Headquarters: 730 Polk Street, San Francisco, California 94109 (415) 776-2211

HOUSE INDUSTRIAL SMOG CONTROLS WOULD ACHIEVE MORE SMOG REDUCTIONS

The Sierra Club urges the Senate conferees to accept the House provisions on industrial smog, and the House conferees to accept the Senate provisions on transportation control measures.

The House provisions requiring reductions of NOX and HC from industrial polluters is preferable to the Senate provisions because it mandates more polluters to install clean up equipment. The House bill retains the current law's requirement that cities use all the available pollution control measures to meet health standards as soon as possible. Finally, it contains tighter deadlines and tougher enforcement provisions.

The House bill requires that the federal government develop and implement an effective cleanup plan if a state fails to do so, as required under the existing Clean Air Act. The Senate bill gives the federal government the authority to act, but does not actually require the federal government to issue a comprehensive cleanup plan if a state fails to do so. Although the federal government has rarely implemented a plan, the threat of federal implementation encourages states to prepare and implement plans. Los Angeles, Phoenix, and other cities began clean up only after the threat of federal implementation.

The Senate bill would provide a cost waiver that would immunize industrial polluters from requirements to make needed annual pollution reduction requirements after the first few years. The House bill does not include this loophole.

Major sources of smog are defined differently by the two bill. The House language requires controls on 100 ton sources of HC in moderately polluted cities, such as Detroit, 50-ton sources in serious areas, such as Cleveland, 25 tons in severe areas, such as Houston and New York, and 10 tons in extreme areas (only Los Angeles). The Senate bill controls only 100 ton sources, except in the nine most polluted cities, where the cut off is 50 tons.

The Senate bill is better because it would require the smoggiest cities to adopt more effective measures to reduce traffic congestion and vehicle use. And it would all states to use federal transportation funds to finance transit and other smog-reducing measures in polluted areas.

July 25, 1990



7/31/90

EPA LINKS DIESEL EXHAUST TO CANCER **Clean Air Bill Needed to Reduce Health Risk**

A recently released draft of an EPA health assessment definitively confirmed the link between diesel exhaust and cancer in humans.

Cancer-causing organic compounds and sulfuric acids cling to the tiny particles in diesel fuel. When released into the air, these particles lodge themselves deep in the lungs. "Eventually lungs clear out the particle but leave behind the other substances," according to Jeanette Wiltse, deputy director of the EPA's health assessment office.

Symptoms of acute exposure to high levels of diesel exhaust include nose and eye irritation, headache, light-headedness, nausea, vomiting, heartburn, weakness, numbness, chest tightness, and wheezing.

Chronic exposure to diesel fumes can cause cancer. 274,000 metric tons of carcinogenic diesel particulates were released into the air during 1986. EPA estimates that in 1986 diesel exhaust caused lung cancer in 178 to 860 Americans. Many workers are regularly exposed to diesel fumes. Studies of occupational exposure show significant increased incidence of certain cancers among heavy equipment operators, railroad workers, transportation equipment operators, and truck drivers.

The preliminary EPA study classifies diesel emissions as "probable human carcinogens."

Pending Clean Air Bills Reduce Diesel Pollution

"Clean fuels" program for diesel-fueled urban buses will reduce deadly diesel emissions.

Senate bill:

*applies to cities of more than 1 million

*0.1 grams per brake horsepower-hour (g/bhp-hr) standard for all new buses starting in 1992

*retrofitting all buses when overhauled to meet 0.1 g/bhp-hr standard starting in 1992

House bill:

*applies to cities of more than 750,000

*similar, except starting in 1993

*similar, except starting in 1996

Additional provisions further reduce deadly diesel emissions.

*Mandatory desulfurization of motor vehicle diesel fuel would reduce diesel particulate emissions and limit aromatic hydrocarbons.

*The House bill's "clean fuel" fleet program requires heavy-duty diesel vehicles to use cleaner fuel.

*Stricter tailpipe standards for diesel cars would reduce diesel emissions.

*Tough emission standards for off-road vehicles would curb diesel fumes.

Protect Public Health, Urge House Conferees to Pass a Clean Air Bill NOW!

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." *John Muir*
National Headquarters: 730 Polk Street, San Francisco, California 94109 (415) 776-2211

EPA Links Diesel Fumes to Cancer

Study Expected to Stir Congressional Debate on Clean Air Act

By Michael Weisskopf
Washington Post Staff Writer

The black fumes emitted by diesel-fueled buses and trucks probably cause cancer in humans, according to an Environmental Protection Agency study released yesterday.

Although earlier studies have linked diesel fumes to cancer, the EPA study is the most authoritative confirmation yet of health dangers from the smoke that many city dwellers consider the most irritating and visible form of pollution.

The assessment is expected to fuel debate in the House-Senate conference on Clean Air Act revisions, where provisions approved by each chamber seek to curb emissions of diesel trucks, buses and construction equipment.

Fewer than 2 percent of U.S. passenger cars run on diesel fuel. But most of the hundreds of thousands of heavy trucks and buses sold yearly are equipped with the

durable, efficient diesel engines. Up to 20 percent of highway vehicles are diesel.

Although Congress required the EPA in 1977 to control toxic particles emitted by diesel-powered cars, rules proposed for trucks and buses were shelved by the Reagan administration until 1988. The EPA only drafted regulations after losing a federal court suit brought by environmentalists.

The EPA first classified diesel particulates as a carcinogen in 1983 by comparing the compounds of diesel exhaust to other combustion products known to cause cancer.

Diesel fuel exhaust contains tiny particles that absorb sulfuric acids and cancer-causing volatile organic compounds, and burrow deep into the lungs.

"Eventually lungs clear out the particle but leave behind the other substances," said Jeanette Wiltse, deputy director of the EPA's health assessment office.

In yesterday's study by EPA's

Office of Health and Environmental Assessment, scientists pulled together more recent laboratory studies on animals and surveys of workers exposed to diesel particulates. The findings are preliminary and subject to review by outside experts.

According to the study, high levels of exposure to the fumes can cause a series of temporary acute symptoms, including headaches, eye irritation, nausea, vomiting, numbness, wheezing, heartburn and chest tightness.

In the long term, cancer is the greatest threat, the report concluded.

Laboratory animals forced to inhale diesel particulate exhaust developed lung tumors, the study said. Application of the pollutant to the skin also produced tumors.

Worker studies showed a significantly increased incidence of liver cancer among heavy equipment operators, lung cancer among truck drivers and transport equipment

operators and bladder cancer among railroad workers, according to the EPA survey.

Both houses of Congress have passed bills with tougher provisions for diesel-fueled buses, the most graphic type of air pollution in many inner cities. Both bills would phase in low-polluting fuels to replace diesel, with the House proposing complete conversion by 1996 and the Senate by 1994.

Both houses also seek to curb pollution from so-called "off-highway" vehicles, including construction and farm equipment. Although the House provision would give the EPA discretion to set standards after conducting a study, the Senate calls on the agency to estimate the pollution from off-highway vehicles and draft emission controls for significant sources.