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Congressional Record S. 357 - Joint Democratic Leadership Statements on Pollution and Environment

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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REMARKS OF THE HON. CARI ALBERT, MAJORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. ALBERT. We believe this Congress of 1970 must, and will, show its continuing concern for those things troubling most Americans. A dominant question, and one of growing concern, is the quality of life for present and future generations. The contemporary American is surrounded by a frightening variety of hazards, and environmental offenses over which he has little or no control. We must attack these problems with full commitment or forever lose the chance to make this continent, indeed this planet Earth, a fit or even tolerable place to live, for us, for our children and for generations beyond.

The Congress has initiated much major environmental legislation. These measures include the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the Wetlands Conservation Act, the Solid Waste Disposal Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Presently the Water Quality Improvement Act, another Congressionally-initiated measure, is pending in a joint House-Senate Conference Committee. That legislation would provide the President with broad new enforcement powers to deal with oil pollution, bring federally supported or authorized projects or activities into compliance with water quality standards, would require control of sewage discharges from vessels and would authorize the staff necessary for effective functioning of the President's Council on Environmental Quality.

We hope and expect the Water Quality Improvement Act to be sent to the President for signature by the Lincoln's Birthday deadline.

We are committed to provide the full $1.25 billion authorized for the Water Quality Improvement Program to meet Sewage Treatment construction grant needs.

Similarly, we must seek increased funding for preservation of America's natural heritage, to clean the air, to provide intelligent control for new technologies, and to insure a better quality life in healthy and attractive surroundings.

We propose the establishment of a joint House-Senate committee on the environment to expand the congressional capacity to deal with environmental problems. The Joint Committee would be a non-legislative Committee, organized to provide a clear focus on the difficult environmental decisions which must be made, and to provide the legislative Committees with the necessary background to insure effective action on short-term and long-term environmental problems and needs. While the Congress is acting to meet its needs in this area, the time has come for the Executive Branch to reexamine its structure as it relates to environmental protection and improvement programs.

Congress is aware of its responsibility to act on pending legislation which is designed to improve the quality of the environment.
We must this year extend and broaden the environmental programs which deal with hazardous substances, solid waste, noise, and air quality. We must examine water pollution measures which will provide innovative means to finance the cost of pollution control beyond 1971.

We must begin to develop a considered national land use policy and examine the need to replace the present haphazard methods of site selection for major industrial facilities with a system designed to assure environmental balance. Closely related to these questions are the problems of population growth and concentration in urban areas, and the need for continuation of the expansion of our national wilderness, park and recreation system to meet the nation's responsibilities. All of these problems must be dealt with in terms of our domestic concerns and the opportunities for international cooperation in the quest for a more livable world.

Finally, we have asked the Chairman of concerned committees to expedite consideration of authorizing legislation and appropriations, and to hold public hearings to seek new ideas for Environmental Improvement Act programs.

Confronted with the problems we face and the need for commitment and for an immediate counterattack, Congress is ready. We have begun, and we must, with the necessary concern, continue.

We in Congress have listened to the concerns of the American people, especially the young. For those who would listen, as we in Congress have, the majority has not been silent on this issue.

We are ready to expand the legislative beginnings we have made into a comprehensive national program committed to the investment of time, resources and funds which must be made to secure the birthright of every American to have a clean, safe and pleasant nation in which to grow and enjoy life.

We are ready to make the investment which must be made in this decade of the 1970s if the contemporary American and his children are to have a clean, safe and pleasant nation in which to live and grow and prosper.