

PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: CLEANER AIR FOR THE NEW CENTURY

May 1, 1999

Today, in his weekly radio address, President Clinton proposes major new steps to improve air quality and protect public health by dramatically reducing pollution from cars, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and light-duty trucks. The proposed rules would strengthen tailpipe standards for cars, SUVs and other vehicles, and reduce sulfur in gasoline, beginning in 2004. Under this plan, manufacturers would produce vehicles that are 77 to 95 percent cleaner than those rolling off the assembly lines today, while preserving consumers' ability to drive the vehicles of their choice.

Cleaner Skies and Healthier Air. Americans have made tremendous progress in improving air quality. Since the Clean Air Act was enacted in 1970, air pollution has been cut more than 30 percent, even as our population and economy have continued to grow. Since 1993, the number of Americans whose communities meet federal air quality standards has grown by 43 million. Building on these successes, the Clinton Administration in 1997 adopted the toughest new health standards in a generation for smog and soot, an action that will protect the health of 125 million Americans, including 35 million children. And last week, on Earth Day, Vice President Gore announced a new measure to restore pristine skies over our national parks and wilderness areas.

Doing Better in the Decades Ahead. The number of miles Americans drive each year rose from 1 trillion in 1970 to 2.5 trillion in 1997 and is expected to continue to rise at a rate of 2-3% a year. Sales of higher-polluting SUVs, minivans and other light-duty trucks, now 50 percent of the market, are expected to keep growing. In a study released last July, EPA reported that additional emission reductions will be necessary to maintain the nation's progress in achieving cleaner air, and could be achieved cost-effectively by coupling tighter tailpipe standards with cleaner fuels. The proposed rules, to be phased in between 2004 and 2009, would:

- For the first time ever, apply a uniform tailpipe standard to passenger cars, SUVs and other light-duty trucks. The new standard would result in cars that are 77% cleaner – and SUVs and other light-duty trucks 95% cleaner – than today's models.
- Reduce average sulfur levels in gasoline from more than 300 to 30 parts per million. These reductions are needed because sulfur fouls catalytic converters, the devices that remove pollutants from auto exhaust.

When fully implemented, the proposed measures would reduce vehicle emissions at a level equivalent to removing 166 million cars from the road. EPA calculates that the proposals would prevent as many as 2,400 deaths, 3,900 cases of chronic bronchitis, and tens of thousands respiratory problems a year.

Flexible and Cost-Effective. The proposed rules reflect extensive consultation by EPA with the auto and fuel industries, states, and the environmental and public health communities. They provide for flexible implementation for the auto and oil industry to meet the new standards cost-effectively – for instance 1) by allowing auto companies to average across the fleet as they phase-in the new requirements and 2) allowing for a market based trading and banking system for both industries to reward those who lead the way in reducing pollution. The projected costs of meeting the standard – about \$100 for cars, \$200 for light-duty trucks, and between one and two cents per gallon of gas – would be outweighed by the projected public health benefits. EPA is inviting public input on the proposed rules, and will carefully consider all comments before the rules are finalized. The proposed rules can be found on the Internet at www.epa.gov/oms/tr2home.htm.