STATEMENT OF CAROL M. BROWNER
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
HEARING ON
THE CLINTON-GORE FY 2001 BUDGET REQUEST

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to present the Clinton-Gore Administration's FY 2001 budget request for the Environmental Protection Agency. Our $7.3 billion request, and the $2.15 billion Better America Bonds program, continue and strengthen the Administration's commitment to the environment and public health by providing our children, our communities with cleaner water, cleaner air and an improved quality of life.

I would like to begin, Mr. Chairman, as I did last year, by thanking this distinguished Committee for its support over these past few years. I believe we have fostered a productive working relationship, which has enabled us to work together towards our mutual goal of protecting public health and the environment. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, as I know the strong bond between our Agency and this Committee will continue through your leadership.

I am particularly proud of this budget request. Seven point three billion dollars will directly support our operating programs, air and water infrastructure, and the trust funds. Two billion, one hundred and fifty million dollars are for the Better America Bonds program, to help communities invest in green-space preservation, water quality improvements and brownfields cleanup. Most importantly, this budget includes an 11 percent increase, or $384 million, for EPA's core environmental programs.

Once again, the President presents a budget that maintains fiscal discipline while making essential investments in environmental priorities. This Administration repeatedly has demonstrated that we can enjoy enormous prosperity– including the longest economic expansion in history and a plan that will eliminate our national debt for the first time since 1835– while implementing important environmental and public health protections. The American people know that our Nation does not have to choose between a strong economy and a healthy environment.

Over the past seven years of unprecedented economic progress, this Administration, working with this Committee, has distinguished itself through unprecedented environmental progress.

The 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, a fine example of what we can achieve when the Committee and the Agency work together, coupled with the President's Clean Water Action Plan, have contributed greatly to cleaning up the Nation's waters and to making drinkable, fishable and swimmable water a reality for all Americans.

· We have set the tightest emissions standards ever for cars and the first such standards that apply equally to SUV's and minivans.

· We have placed special emphasis on protecting our Nation's greatest resource - our children - through actions like working for, winning and implementing the Food Quality Protection Act, that for the first time puts emphasis on protecting the health of infants and children from pesticide risks.

· We have provided communities with new access to more information about toxic chemicals released into their communities by greatly expanding the public's right-to-know.

· Under this Administration, more than three times as many toxic waste site cleanups have been completed than were completed in the previous 12 years of the Superfund program.

· And we have taken the unprecedented step of revitalizing communities by accelerating the cleanup of Brownfields and returning the land to productive use.

The budget we are announcing today preserves this record of success and builds on it.

As it has since the inception of the Clinton-Gore Administration, the EPA budget builds upon those core environmental programs that are the backbone of this agency. This includes: setting environmental standards; environmental enforcement and compliance; and direct implementation programs for the states.

In FY 2001, the Clinton-Gore Administration is requesting an 11 percent, or $384 million, increase over last year in its operating programs to allow the Agency to meet the American public's expectations for a safe and healthy environment. The increased money in the operating budget is directed at programs for cleaner air and water, safer food and sound science.

For water, the President's FY 2001 budget bolsters the successes we have achieved by providing $495 million in Clean Water state grants, including a $50 million increase to specifically address polluted runoff, the largest current threat to our Nation's water quality.

The Great Lakes, among our Nation's most revered and beautiful water resources, receive $50 million in the President's Budget for a new initiative that will continue the progress we have made in their cleanup and restoration. Through this initiative, states and communities will be eligible for competitively-awarded matching funds to improve water quality through stormwater pollution control, wetlands restoration and remediation of contaminated sediment.

We are stepping up our efforts to identify and restore polluted waterways by providing an additional $45 million in state grants for the Administration's new Cleaner Waters Across America program. The program is aimed at waterways still in need of improvements. Resources will be used to develop specific restoration plans for some 20,000 waterways across the Nation.

Consistent with our goal to provide sufficient capital so that, over the long-term, $2 billion in average annual assistance will be available to localities, the President's Budget provides $800 million for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund - a flexible funding mechanism designed to help communities provide clean, safe and healthy water. This year, we are requesting authority to give states the option of using 19 percent of their Clean Water SRF in the form of grants to fight polluted runoff. I am asking Congress to join us in providing states with this additional flexibility to provide clean and safe water for the public.

The Administration has taken the most aggressive actions in history to provide cleaner, healthier air for all Americans, and this budget continues that effort.

The President's Budget is providing $85 million for the Clean Air Partnership Fund - a fund that will provide resources to states, cities and tribes to help reduce air pollution. This initiative will foster public-private partnerships to help communities achieve their own clean air goals in ways that make the best sense for them.

In addition, to continue reducing the air pollution that contributes to global warming, $227 million has been proposed for the third year of the Climate Change Technology Initiative. This program promotes voluntary measures that reduce energy use and bring down the energy bills of all Americans, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, to continue to strengthen our relationships with our state and tribal partners, this budget provides $215 million in state and tribal grants to help find solutions to air pollution. Of these resources, $5 million will be granted to states and regional planning bodies specifically to combat the problem of regional haze - one of the most obvious effects of air pollution.

The Administration remains dedicated to improving children's health by providing $68 million for the Children's Environmental Health Initiative. These funds go for critical programs that fight such threats as lead contamination and childhood asthma. We also are continuing our dedication to food safety through the Food Quality Protection Act by providing $75 million for its implementation so that the American public will continue to enjoy one of the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supplies in the world.

The President's Budget continues expanding the public's right-to-know about toxic releases in their local communities through several initiatives. One of those new efforts is a new environmental information system that will provide the public more critical environmental information than ever before. Under this Initiative the Administration will provide $30 million to work with the states to provide one of the Nation's greatest sources of shared, key environmental information.

To better protect America's communities, the Administration is again proposing the Better America Bonds Initiative. This Initiative, which has increased by more than a billion dollars over 5 years from last year's proposal, will help communities grow in ways that ensure sustainable economic growth by providing them the resources they need to address local smart-growth challenges like protecting water sources and shrinking parklands as well as cleaning up brownfields. Through this initiative, the Administration will provide the authority to issue $2.15 billion for investments by state, local, and tribal governments in 2001.

This budget provides almost $1.45 billion to continue our progress in cleaning up the Nation's Superfund toxic waste sites. The Agency plans to complete construction at 75 sites for a total of 830 construction completions by the end of 2001. This will keep EPA on a path towards meeting the President's goal of 900 construction completions by 2002. In the Clinton-Gore Administration, about three times as many Superfund sites have been cleaned up as in the 12 previous years of the program. The new budget proposal will continue that progress. In addition, to help communities return their abandoned or idled industrial properties to productive use, the President has committed $92 million for the extremely successful Brownfields redevelopment program.

The Clinton-Gore budget request for FY 2001 protects public health and the environment by ensuring that we will be able to provide America with cleaner water, cleaner air, better protection of children, more protection for individual communities and a continuing cleanup of toxic wastes and restoration of Brownfields.

The Clinton-Gore Administration's budget protects the health and the environment of the American public. Last year, however, Congress "earmarked" from EPA's budget some $470 million for more than 320 special projects in individual congressional districts. These earmarks direct money from the Agency's core programs – the very programs that keep the environmental cops on the beat, use the best science to set standards to protect our children, and support the work of our partners, the states, tribes and local governments. That is why we are not carrying over last year's earmarks, and that is why we will continue to oppose earmarks this year.

We also remain strongly opposed to any legislative riders that undermine our country's basic environmental laws. Our goal is to work with this Committee, which has the jurisdiction over almost all of this country's environmental laws, to provide real protections for the Nation. I strongly believe that the authorizing committees, the traditional forum for discussing these issues, should again guide the process.

By providing our children and our communities with cleaner air, cleaner water and an improved quality of life, this budget maintains the Administration's dedication to the protection of public health and the environment. It ensures that the Environmental Protection Agency will be aggressively adding to seven years of unprecedented environmental progress built under the Clinton-Gore Administration.

These are the highlights of our Fiscal Year 2001 request. I look forward to discussing with you, as the year progresses, these initiatives and innovative financing mechanisms. I would be happy to answer your questions at this time.