Statement of Governor Christine Todd Whitman,
Nominee to be Administrator of
the Environmental Protection Agency,
before the United States Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, DC
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is an honor to come before this committee today as President-elect Bush's nominee to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. I am grateful for the opportunity the President-elect has given me.

Over the past several weeks, I have enjoyed sitting down with you, the members of the committee, to talk about what we can do together to preserve and protect our nation's environment.

I am especially looking forward to accepting your kind invitations to come to your states - and perhaps even visit some trout streams. It was on the banks of a little stream that ran through our farm that my father first introduced me to the beauty of nature, and I have been hooked ever since.

Mr. Chairman, we stand today at a place of enormous opportunity. Over the past three decades, our nation has won so many important victories in our common mission to preserve and protect America's environment.

We have seen a significant transformation in the way we view our air, water, and land. Today, there is universal agreement that our natural resources are valuable, not just for the economic prosperity they help create, but for what they add to our quality of life. No longer do we debate about "whether" we need to act to protect our environment. Instead, we discuss "how" we can keep America green while keeping our economy growing.

Due to the progress we have made, both in our actions and our attitudes, America is on the cusp of another major transformation. We are ready to enter a new era of environmental policy - an era that requires a new philosophy of public stewardship and personal responsibility.

To discover what this new era will look like, one need only look to the states. There's one state with which I'm particularly familiar, so let me tell you a bit about what we've done in New Jersey over the past seven years.

In my home state, we are moving beyond the "command and control" model of mandates, regulations, and litigation. We are, instead, working to forge strong partnerships among citizens, government, and business that are built on trust, cooperation, and shared mutual goals.

Those partnerships are producing results - clear, measurable results. I would like to share some of them with you.

Our air is cleaner. For example, the number of days New Jersey violated the federal one-hour air quality standard for ground level ozone has dropped from 45 in 1988 to just 4 last year. We're doing a better job monitoring our air quality, and we're on target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below 1990

levels through incentives to encourage voluntary reductions, promote energy efficiency and renewable technologies, and reduce landfill gas emissions.

Our water is clearer. The Delaware River is thriving again, with the shad population up by more than 300 percent since the 1970s. New Jersey leads the nation in opening shellfish beds for harvesting. Annual ocean beach closings have dropped from more than 800 in 1988 to just 11 this past year.

Our land is cleaner. We have transformed our brownfields program into a redevelopment tool, providing $15 million to help towns clean-up sites and market them for re-use. Mine is the only state in America with a reimbursement program for private parties that voluntarily clean-up sites. In addition, in 1998, the voters of New Jersey overwhelmingly approved my plan to preserve one million acres of open space and farmland by 2010 - and we are already 20 percent of the way there.

Only by measuring the quality of the environment - the purity of the water, the cleanliness of the air, the protection afforded the land - can we measure the success of our efforts. By those measures, New Jersey is succeeding: our water and air are cleaner, and our land better protected than it was seven years ago.

At the same time, New Jersey's economy is stronger than ever - more people have jobs in my state today than ever before in our history. As President-elect Bush has emphasized - and as New Jersey has seen - environmental protection and economic prosperity do go hand in hand.

The President-elect has articulated a set of clear principles that I will work to implement at the EPA, should I be confirmed. I would like to highlight several of them today.

First, we will launch a new era of cooperation among all stakeholders in environmental protection. Only by including all Americans can we meet the challenges we face. There is much government can do, but government cannot do it alone.

Second, we will maintain a strong federal role, but we will provide flexibility to the states and to local communities. They need that flexibility to craft solutions that meet their unique situations. We will also respect state and local authority and rely on their expertise.

Third, we will continue to set high standards and will make clear our expectations. To meet and exceed those goals, we will place greater emphasis on market-based incentives.

Next, we will use strong science. Scientific analysis should drive policy. Neither policy nor politics should drive scientific results.

Finally, we will work to promote effective compliance with environmental standards without weakening our commitment to vigorous enforcement of tough laws and regulations. We will offer the carrot when appropriate, and always preserve the stick of enforcement.

Taken together, these reforms will transform the way the EPA meets its mission. We will work in a bipartisan fashion to achieve them. They will also produce real results - results to which we will be able to look and know how far we have come - and how much further we need to go.

I am looking forward to the job ahead, should you honor me with confirmation. The EPA is staffed with some of the finest environmental professionals in the world. I know that they are eager, as I am, to begin our work together.

I also know that the demands I will face as Administrator of the EPA will not be the same I faced as governor. The position I hope to assume allows no room for regional favoritism. But I do expect to bring to my job an understanding - and an empathy -for what it is like to be on the receiving end of directives from Washington.

Mr. Chairman, one of the first things my father taught me, he taught me at that trout stream I mentioned a few minutes ago. I remember him telling me, "Christie, always leave anyplace you go cleaner than you found it."

He didn't know it at the time, but that was awfully good advice for someone who would someday be nominated to serve as head of the nation's agency for environmental protection. I pledge to you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, that if I am confirmed I will do everything I can as EPA Administrator to leave America's environment cleaner than I found it.

Thank you.