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Thank you Dean Ottinger[1] for that introduction. It is indeed a great pleasure to be here today, especially to be introduced by a true pioneer of this country's environmental efforts. Today, after more than a quarter century of progress in protecting public health and the environment, if we look back at the struggles that made it all possible, literally, from the first Earth Day to the numerous legislative battles for cleaner air and cleaner water, right in the middle of all of it, each and

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* Carol M. Browner became the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in January of 1993. As head of the EPA, Administrator Browner is charged with protecting the Nation's air and water from harmful pollution, overseeing the disposal of garbage and hazardous waste, cleaning up contaminated sites under the Superfund law, and establishing rules for pesticide use and food safety. In her first year at the EPA, Administrator Browner launched the agency in an important new direction by promoting a firm commitment to environmental goals, along with common sense innovation and flexibility in reaching those goals.

From 1991 to 1993, Administrator Browner was the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Regulation for the State of Florida. There, she earned praise for building innovative partnerships to protect public health and the environment while also promoting economic growth. From 1986 to 1988, Administrator Browner worked for then Senator Lawton Chiles, now Governor of Florida. She also served as Legislative Director for then Senator Al Gore, Jr. Administrator Browner is a graduate of the University of Florida and its School of Law.

1. Dean Ottinger came to Pace University School of Law when he retired from Congress in 1984. As a professor, he taught in the environmental law program. As co-director of the Center for Environmental Legal Studies, he started an Energy Project which raises $900,000 per year, advocating utility investment in conservation and renewable energy resources in six states. In his sixteen years as a member of the United States House of Representatives, he authored a substantial body of energy and environmental laws. He was one of the earliest environmentalists in Congress in 1965. As Chairman of the Energy Conservation and Power Subcommittee, Energy and Commerce Committee, he was instrumental in adopting key energy and environmental legislation. Dean Ottinger was a founding staff member of the Peace Corps, serving in it during 1961-1964. He was appointed Dean at Pace University School of Law in December 1994.

every time, we find the name Richard Ottinger. Without a doubt, I think we are all extremely fortunate that Dean Ottinger has prevailed in his efforts. On behalf of all of the people of this great country, I want to thank Dean Ottinger for what he has done, and continues to do, to ensure that we pass along a safe and healthy environment to our children, not only in the work that he does here, but also in the work he does in holding our feet to the fire. Thank you.

Let me also assure you, Dean Ottinger, that we are doing our utmost, not only to safeguard your legacy, but to really build on it, to enable us to best address the environmental challenges of the next century. Four or some years ago, President Clinton and I came to Washington, and we called on the businesses, environmental communities, state and local governments, individuals, literally all levels to join together to forge what we termed a new generation of environmental protection. Since that work began, we have made real progress. I think that it is fair to say that today real people in real communities are reaping real everyday benefits. Tens of millions of Americans today are breathing cleaner air. We were able to achieve, in the last four years, the single largest reduction in toxic air pollution in the history of this country. We set forth tough new standards for toxic hazardous waste disposal, protecting community after community. We took aggressive action to keep contamination out of our water, and the President proposed and signed a new Safe Drinking Water Act[2] to protect the health of every single person in this country, to ensure that when they turn on their tap, the water is safe to drink. We have cleaned more toxic waste dumps in the last four years than in the first twelve years of the Superfund program,[3] literally allowing thousands of children the right to play in a neighborhood, a community, free of toxics. Something we believe every child should have a right to do.

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2. 42 U.S.C. §§ 300f to 300j-26, *as amended by* Pub.L. 104-182, Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1613.

3. *See* Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 9601-9675 (1980).

The President also recently signed the new Food Safety Law,[4] embodying the principles of food safety reform that this Administration proposed to Congress more than three years ago. We addressed the need to create a single, more protective, comprehensive, health-based, child-driven standard for all pesticides, all health risks and all foods.

We are taking another series of steps to ensure that the awareness of our children's unique sensitivity to environmental hazards, from toxic chemicals to dirty air, will guide each and every action that we take as this country's environmental agency to protect public health and our environment. From now on, when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets standards, public health environmental standards, we will take into account the unique vulnerabilities of our children. They are different, they are small, they are growing, they react differently to environmental hazards. In addition to that, we are committed to reviewing existing regulations to ensure that they are based on the best current available science, most particularly, when it comes to our children, when it comes to the most sensitive among us.

Yesterday, I announced the creation of the EPA's Office of Children's Health and Protection. We are thrilled that Dr. Phil Landrigan, who is the author of the National Academy of Science's Report on Children and Pesticides, will join us as a consultant to help provide the leadership to shape and chart the course of that office. This is an office that will allow us to carry out the review of existing public health and environmental standards, as well as further our understanding of children's environmental health and ensure that an awareness of their unique sensitivity to environmental threats guides all of our actions at the EPA.

Today, as you discuss the Nation's environmental regulatory system and proposals for reforming it, I would ask that you ask yourselves a simple question. Have we reached the point in this country where Americans would abandon their long standing desire for environmental policy, for environ-

4. *See* Food Quality Protection Act, Pub. L. 104-170, Aug. 3, 1996, 110 Stat. 1489.

mental regulations that put the public health first? Or perhaps, to put it another way, are we prepared as a country to accept large numbers of Americans experiencing real health effects, unfortunately in some instances death, because some in industry project high cost to reduce pollution? Once again, this would suggest that as a country we have to choose between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. I believe the answer is no. I believe that history proves that the answer is no. The American people are deeply committed to a safe, healthy environment for their children, for their communities. They expect and they deserve clean healthy air to breathe, clean healthy water to drink, food safe to eat, land safe to live on. They have every right to expect that their government will do that for them and that their industries will work with their government to protect their health and provide a safe environment for their future.

Now there are some who believe there is another way. Some would say that agencies like the EPA should be required to show, in each and every instance, that the actual dollar benefits, the public health benefits, outweigh the cost of meeting tough public health standards. This whole argument about cost-benefit analysis is not a new argument, and no one is suggesting that a cost-benefit analysis is not an extremely important tool to shape the debate, to shape the discussion about how we actually go about the difficult work of reducing our pollution, of implementing new pollution reduction strategies. We do not believe, I do not believe, this Administration does not believe, that the public wants a set of public health standards merely driven by a single economic cost-benefit analysis. It cannot be the only tool that shapes our decisions, that shapes our thinking. It is certainly a tool that gives us a lot of answers, a lot of information. But it cannot give us all of the answers. If we were suddenly forced to limit our decisions, to limit the public health protections we provide the American people, to the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis, then we would not be doing the job of public health and environmental protection. In fact, if you look at the history of the difficult decisions this country has made in

terms of public health and environmental protection, you will see exactly what I mean.

When the EPA ordered the phase-out of lead in gasoline back in the 1970s, this was not an issue without controversy – some of you do not remember, some of you were probably children at the time. There was great debate about whether or not the EPA should tell the petroleum industry to take the lead out of gasoline. We did not know when we made that decision as a country, when the EPA made that decision for the country, exactly how lead was ending up in our children's blood. We did not know exactly how lead was causing our children to lose IQ points. We could not explain, with absolute scientific certainty, the path that the lead pursued in our children's bodies, from inhalation to illness and, in some instances, death. We could not come up with an intricate detailed cost-benefit analysis that would have justified the decision at that point in time, which is what some would now require us to do. We did not know all of the specifics. We did not know the cost-benefit scenario. We did know, and what the best available science showed us at that time, was that with the advent of leaded gasoline, our children's blood changed and they became sick. We had a cause – leaded gasoline. We had an effect – lead poisoning. So we took action. We took sensible action to protect the health of our children. As a result of that decision, you can literally chart the decline of leaded gasoline and it will run parallel, absolutely parallel, with the decline of lead in the blood of our children. An entire generation of children was protected. Those levels of lead continue to fall because we made a good public health decision. We followed the science. We saw the cause. We saw the effect. We acted.

Now some believe, based on what they propose today, if you apply that to the lead decision, the effect would have been to require the EPA to delay its action. To wait, perhaps five, ten years or more before acting on leaded gasoline. Should we have waited to see how the lead-poisoned children of the 1970s actually fared in the 1980s? Did we have to know precisely how many IQ points would be lost? How many children would suffer? How many children would go to the hospital?

How many children would die? Should we have waited for the people to die so that we could dissect their lungs and tell you exactly where the lead went and how it got there in each and every step of the biology? No. We had a cause. We had an effect. So we took sensible action. We knew in the 1970s it was bad. We knew it was poisoning our children. By acting when we did, we protected our children. We also protected many adults. We protected them from thousands of cases of heart disease, stroke and hypertension. We did the right thing.

Now the Clean Air Act,[5] one of the many environmental laws under which we function, requires, and has required since its inception signed by President Richard Nixon twenty-seven years ago, that the EPA actually provide a level of public health protection for the people of this country with an adequate margin of safety when it comes to the six most commonly found air pollutants[6] in the United States. When we look at our history in terms of air pollution, we see yet again, that to put costs ahead of public health and science would be foolish. Each and every time that we have set about revising and strengthening the public health air quality standards, the public health protections promised by the Clean Air Act for twenty-seven years, the costs were projected on the front end of that debate. On the back end, when we are done meeting the standards, done asking industry to do its part, we have always seen that the costs on the front end were grossly overstated, not just by some in industry, but by the EPA itself.

During the 1990 debate regarding the reauthorization of the Clean Air Act, following approximately ten years of discussion, what to do with acid rain in this country was still being debated. The initial cost projection, to address the acid rain problem for the people of this country, was fifteen-hundred dollars per ton of sulfur dioxide reduction. That is what industry projected. The EPA projected six-hundred dollars

5. 42 U.S.C. §§ 7401-7671q, (1963) CAA §§ 101-618q.

6. Sulfer dioxide (SO^2), particulate matter (PM 10), carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O^3), nitrogen dioxide (NO^2), and lead (Pb).

per ton of reduction. This is what the cost-benefit analysis showed us on the front end. By the time we were actually working on reducing and solving the acid rain problem, it was costing about one-hundred dollars per ton. Today, on the Chicago Board of Trade, where they actually sell the allowances for acid rain, it is a credit trading program. You can buy them, the last time I checked, for seventy-eight dollars a ton. The auto industry stated a few years ago that they could not deal with California's demand and desire for a cleaner car because it would be far too expensive and would cost us something on an average of fifteen-hundred dollars per car. They are selling that car today, it is a cleaner car, it is good for the people of California, and it is costing less than a hundred dollars per car. The point is that industry always rises to the challenge. Again and again, we work in partnership, government, industry, the private sector, the public sector and what we find are far cheaper, new, innovative ways to solve pollution problems, to meet public health standards, to lower pollution more than anything that is estimated on the front end. The record of the last twenty-five years shows this. It shows that while we have made tremendous progress in this country to improve our environment and to improve the public health protection, our economy has grown. Our economic output has doubled while we have implemented the highest environmental protection standards in the world. Now this is, I think, positive proof that we do not have to choose between a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

President Clinton, Vice President Gore and I believe that the new generation of environmental protection, to which we have committed ourselves, must build upon this progress. We must bring to this challenge that which has long made this country great: our creativity, our innovation and our ingenuity. The system that we design for the future must do more than merely seek the minimum. It must reward those who are willing to go further. It must demand the best. What happens far too often now is that the standard is set and people work to get right to the other side of that standard rather than looking broadly and thinking comprehensively about whether we can do it better. We must encourage the

innovation and creativity that has made this country so great. We must be willing to reward those who do more than an adequate job. Those who push further to develop the new solutions, who provide the strongest protections. We must continue to put public health first, but at the same time, under current law, we can operate in a more flexible, common sense, innovative and less burdensome way.

The new generation of environmental protection means, on the part of the EPA, reinventing the process, the system of regulations, so that we are truly finding the common sense, cost effective solutions. It means that we are doing this in partnership—industry, government, and communities. We have already been about this task of changing the system, recognizing what is good in the system today and what, quite frankly, will not be adequate to meet the challenges that lie ahead. We have eliminated more than fifteen million hours of paperwork for businesses and communities. We expect to eliminate another ten million hours of paperwork. This is time that will no longer be spent filling out forms. Time that can be spent doing the job of public health and environmental protection, meeting the air standards, meeting the water standards, cleaning up the toxic waste sites. Thanks to our administrative reforms in the Superfund, a toxic waste cleanup program, the cleanups are now moving faster and costing less. Twenty percent faster and twenty percent less costly. That is because we sat down with the communities and the industries and we said, "Okay, you deal with this program everyday, let us design a program that makes sense. Let us be about getting the job done."

Under our Brownfields Initiative, the EPA is working with local leadership and communities across the country to help them clean up the old, abandoned urban sites. Sites that can be a tremendous bonus to local communities. You could use these sites to provide electricity, sewers and water, but because of some light contamination and some legal problems, no one becomes involved. We are bringing the developers back to those sites. We are seeing them cleaned up. We are seeing them redeveloped. Most importantly, the tax base of the cities are expanding and hope is being restored.

We are also making steady progress on our Common Sense Initiative. Working, literally, industry by industry with all of the stakeholders to design the blueprint of environmental and public health protection. We have recognized that we have to reward the good faith efforts of businesses to find and fix environmental problems, to actually prevent problems. Today, if a small business comes to one of our Compliance Centers, if they call us and say, "I think I am doing the right thing, I have read the regulations, I have followed the requirements but I am not sure," we will work with them to solve the problem. We will set aside the penalty, if they act in good faith to solve the problem. We recognize that compliance is difficult, and we want to help them do what they are prepared to do, which is the right thing.

We are also saying to those businesses, to those communities, to those states, if you have a cutting-edge program, if you are willing to do more than what the current requirements would have you do, then we will provide the flexibility. Our Project XL,[7] for excellence and leadership, is about bringing together all of the parties around a particular facility, perhaps, and saying, "How do we go about doing this job better? How do we exceed the current standards?" We will provide the flexibility. Again, looking at how to adjust the system, how to find new solutions to environmental problems that face us.

We have many other efforts under way designed to change the system, but the last one I want to speak about is the issue of public involvement. None of this will work if the public is not part and parcel to the process. It is for them that we do this work. They are critical to reinventing the regulatory process. They are an important check and balance in the system. We believe that all of those who must live with the consequences of our decisions, of environmental decisions, communities, industries, people, all must be active participants in making the decisions. To be active participants, they must be informed. They must have access to information. When a community comes to understand what its river

7. Regulatory Reinvention (XL) Pilot Projects 60 Fed. Reg. 27,282 (1995).

once was, what it can be in the future, what the pollution choking it today will do to it in the future if left unattended and unabated; when they actually come to understand that, they are very good at making very difficult and complex decisions in terms of from which point source the reduction should come. What should we as a community do? Not just in terms of protecting this river, but where do we want to find ourselves as a community ten, fifteen, twenty years from now? Our responsibility as government is to ensure the public access to information, ensure the public access to the decision makers.

We have been expanding our right-to-know programs. Through our Toxics Release Inventory[8] Program, the public has a right to know about toxic pollution in their communities, zip code by zip code. Already, emissions of 648 different toxic chemicals must be reported to the public. But we believe we must do more. So, we will soon complete an expansion of the number of facilities covered, the number of facilities that will be reporting their toxic emissions.

Yesterday, I announced the creation of the EPA's Center for Environmental Information and Statistics. It will be up and running on January 1, 1998. We intend to use this Center to fulfill a commitment made by the President last summer at a major environmental address when he called for one spot access, if you will, to environmental information. We look forward to the day when people can walk in to an EPA office, their public library, go to their home computer and call up on the screen all of the information we have about the air quality, the water quality, the drinking water, the toxic sites, the toxic emissions, giving them a clear understanding of what is happening in their community, giving them access to all of the information that we have.

Quite simply, we believe that we are about change. As Thomas Jefferson said, "Institutions must keep pace with the times." So we seek through our reinvention, through our self-evaluation, to literally keep pace with the times. We cannot, however, be satisfied to merely change the process. It is im-

8. 42 U.S.C. §§ 11,001-11,050 (1994).

portant that we continue to honor the commitments we made, clean air, clean water, safe communities, safe food. It is important to the business community that if their competitors ignore environmental requirements, disregard the standards that they have worked so hard to meet, that we are there to hold them accountable, to take the enforcement action, to maintain the level playing field that this system demands. We will continue to work with all industry, small and large businesses, government, state, local and most importantly, the people of this country, to do what they have every right to expect of the government, protect the things we all share – our air, our water, our land, the health of our children.

Thank you all very much for this opportunity.