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DECEMBER 17, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary
-----THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to have signed the Safe Drinking Water Act (S. 433). Much effort has gone into the development of this legislation as much as for any enacted in this session of Congress.

This Administration proposed a Safe Drinking Water Act and several others were introduced by Members of Congress. All of these bills had the same objectives: to increase protection of the public's health. Many compromises had to be made before this bill reached my desk. Yet it is a strong bill, reflecting the combined efforts of the Congress and the Administration.

This legislation will enhance the safety of public drinking water supplies in this country through the establishment and enforcement of national drinking water standards. The Environmental Protection Agency has the primary responsibility for establishing our national standards. The States have the primary responsibility of enforcing them and for otherwise ensuring the quality of drinking water. In some situations where States fail to enforce the standards, the Federal Government could. I believe this will seldom be necessary. During the extensive consideration of this legislation, spokesmen for the Administration opposed extensive Federal involvement in what has traditionally been State and local regulatory matters, and unnecessary costs to the Federal Government. Even with the compromises that were made, I still have reservations about those two aspects of this bill; and I intend that it be administered so as to minimize both Federal involvement and costs.

The bill enhances the ability of the Federal Government to conduct research into the health effects of contaminants in drinking water. Recent news stories have highlighted several potential drinking water problems that can only be resolved through research. I am pleased to say that we are already moving ahead on these problems.

Nothing is more essential to the life of every single American than clean air, pure food, and safe drinking water. There have been strong national programs to improve the quality of our air and the purity of our food. This bill will provide us with the protection we need for drinking water.

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