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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED AT THE  
DEDICATION OF THE  
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH CENTER  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

The dedication of this National Environmental Research Center is an event of great significance -- to Cincinnati and to our nation. It is a message 214 million Americans are sending to future generations of Americans.

It is \$30 million worth of laboratories, research facilities, equipment and training capacity, saying to our children and their children: We care. We care about the air you will breathe, the water you will drink, the land you will need. It is a message about our environment that says to all: America -- handle with care!

The research facility we dedicate today is a major achievement in realizing an environment that will add to our life experience rather than subtract from our life span. It is one of the most advanced laboratories of its kind in the world. But Cincinnati is no stranger to landmark environmental research.

Over sixty years ago, the very first environmental health activities on a national level were begun here when the U.S. Public Health Service set up a stream pollution investigation station in 1913. Since then, the Queen City has become internationally known as a research center furthering a wide variety of environmental disciplines.

It is particularly fitting that my good friend, Bob Taft, the distinguished senior Senator from Ohio, is here with us today. He carries on the commitment and principles of his father in these vital areas of ecological concern.

The Robert A. Taft Sanitary Engineering Center -- named in honor of Bob's father who so ably served the state of Ohio in the Senate for fourteen years -- was dedicated in 1954 and for two decades has contributed important new research in the areas of radiation, air pollution, and solid waste.

The facility we dedicate today will expand still further the capacities of Cincinnati's efforts in this field. Built on twenty acres of land donated by the City of Cincinnati and with ready access to the University of Cincinnati -- this center will help provide the research and development so urgently needed to once again reconcile the needs of our society and nature.

In a time of reconciliation, I would propose one more area for greater understanding. I would suggest a detente with nature. Spinoza once said, "The power of nature is the power of God." We have too long treated the natural world as an adversary rather than as a life-sustaining gift from the Almighty. If man has the genius to build, he must also have the ability and the responsibility to preserve.

We stand before one of the instruments necessary to achieve this preservation. Research and development are the foundation of any effort to protect and secure this environment.

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Through research, we acquire the essential understanding of the impact of pollution on the health of man and on the functioning of natural systems.

Research permits us to devise and develop at minimum cost to the consumers the necessary technologies to control pollution. Such research will be actively pursued within the walls of this building. The construction of this new facility by your government's Environmental Protection Agency symbolizes the growth and maturing of our ongoing policy to protect and preserve America's precious air, land and water.

When the decade of the seventies began, we made the achievement of a cleaner and healthier environment a matter of the highest national priority. We achieved steady and substantial progress toward that goal. And you have my pledge that this country will remain firmly committed to continuing that progress. As long as I have anything to say about it, this country's symbol will never be an empty beer can in a river of garbage.

With the formation of the Environmental Quality Council and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, this nation took a major step in establishing a new environmental agenda. Since 1969, we have seen the passage of significant legislation to provide the tools to keep America the beautiful.

And, when Congress returns from this Fourth of July recess, I will submit a proposal to establish a comprehensive and uniform system for fixing liability and settling claims resulting from oil pollution damages in American waters and coastlines.

My proposal will also implement two International Conventions, now under consideration by the Congress, dealing with the problem of oil pollution caused by tankers on the high seas.

I consider this initiative to be of great national importance. America's energy needs require the accelerated development of our offshore oil and gas resources and the increased use of deep water ports.

This proposal will allow us to proceed with determination, but in a manner that is environmentally acceptable and sound. We ask all citizens and groups concerned with the quality of America's environment to join with us in seeking new ways to preserve it. This is not a Federal concern alone. It is the responsibility of every level of government and each individual -- all the way from the White House to your house. We all breathe the same air -- or smog. It's up to us.

I am convinced that an active partnership between Federal, State and local agencies is the proper formula for assuring the future success of our environmental efforts. This is not idle theorizing. Such cooperation has already brought about, in many areas of the country, a remarkable improvement in air and water quality. Great rivers and lakes once given up as "dead" have shown dramatic new life. Lake Erie, the butt of many a joke was virtually written off by some as unsalvageable. It now shows signs of a healthy recovery.

Even more encouraging, salmon have reappeared in the Connecticut and Hudson Rivers. They cough a lot, but they have reappeared. Cooperation and prudent self-interest has also made for other solid advances. Nearly 80 percent of all major "stationary sources" of air pollution -- utility plants, factories, large buildings -- are now complying with emission regulations or are meeting an abatement schedule.

The result of these and other clean air regulations is apparent. The citizens of many great cities have already benefited from the life-giving improvement in the purity of their air. There is much more to be done but let us not be indifferent to what has already been accomplished.

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As you know, I have always retained a special interest in sports activities. I like to swim, to golf, to ski, to play tennis -- to take walks in an atmosphere that renews and returns perspective. I cherish the outdoors and I stand with those who fight to preserve what is best in our environment. But as President, I can never lose sight of another insistent aspect of our environment -- the economic needs of the American people. Your security and well-being must enter into every decision I make -- and it does.

I pursue the goal of clean air and pure water but I must also pursue the objective of maximum jobs and continued economic progress. Unemployment is as real and as sickening a blight as any pollutant that threatens this nation.

If accomplishing every worthy environmental objective would slow down our effort to regain energy independence and a stronger economy, then I must weigh all factors involved. My decision must reflect the needs of the future, but also, the demands of the present. I will do my best to neglect neither.

The building we dedicate today is imposing proof of our commitment to tomorrow. Within its walls and within the laboratories of other such facilities, problems will be defined and solutions will be found. Working together, we Americans have always been able to find the difficult answers.

Here in Cincinnati, I know you will find your share of them. Ours is a bountiful land. Let us resolve to live in it, at one with man, with nature, and with God.

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