

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
DEDICATION OF THE
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH CENTER

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1:10 P.M. EDT

Bob Taft, distinguished Members of the House of Representatives, Will Gradison, Don Clancy, Gene Snyder, John Breckinridge, Bud Brown, President Bennis, Russ Peterson, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen:

It is really a great privilege and pleasure to be in Cincinnati again at a time when so many aspects of technology and automation are being questioned, as well as challenged.

It is awfully good to be in a city where everybody is for a Big Red Machine. (Laughter)

Let me say just one thing about the Cincinnati Reds. (Laughter) Any organization that could go more than two weeks without making an error, that organization should forget about sports. (Laughter) We could use them in Government.

At the very least, they should be making cornerstones. (Laughter)

The dedication of this National Environmental Research Center is an event of great significance, not only to Cincinnati, but 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 to their children, "We care. We care about the air you breathe, the water you will drink, the land that you will need."

It is a message about environment that says to all of us, "America, handle with care."

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The research facility that we dedicate today is a major achievement in realizing an environment that will add to our life experience rather than to subtract from our lifespan. 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 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 and fine friend, Bob Taft, the distinguished senior Senator from Ohio, is here with us today. He carries on the commitment and the principles of his father in these vital areas of ecological caution and concern.

The Robert A. Taft Sanitary Engineering Center -- named in honor of Bob's father, who so ably served in the State of Ohio as its Senator for 14 years -- was dedicated in 1954 and for two decades has contributed important research in the areas of radiation, air pollution and solid waste.

The facilities we dedicate today will expand still further the capacity of Cincinnati's efforts in this field. Built on 20 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.

It is a time of reconciliation.

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I would propose in this circumstance one more area of greater understanding. I would suggest a detente with nature. Spinoza once said, and I quote, "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, which he has, he must also have the ability and the responsibility to preserve.

We stand here today 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. Through research we acquire the essential understanding of the impact of pollution on the health of man and on the function of natural systems.

Research permits us to devise and to develop, at minimum cost to the consumer, the necessary technologies to control pollution. Such research will be actively pursued within the walls of this fine facility.

The construction of this wonderful building by your Government's Environmental Protection Agency symbolizes the growth and the maturing of our ongoing policy to protect and to 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 strong personal pledge that this country will remain firmly committed to continuing that progress. And I should add, 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 the 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 America's waters and coastlines.

This proposal will 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 one of great national importance.

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America's energy needs require the accelerated development of our off-shore oil and gas resources, and the increased use of our 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, and it is up to us.

I am convinced that an active partnership between the 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, many areas of our 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 very apparent. The citizens of many, 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 already has been accomplished.

As some of you may know, I have always retained a very special interest in sports activity. 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 out of doors, and I stand with those who fight to preserve what is best in our environment.

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As President, I can never lose sight of another insistent aspect of our environment -- the economic need of the American people, your security, your 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 the Nation.

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

In the building we dedicate today, it is imposing proof of our commitment to tomorrow. Within its walls and within the laboratory 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 that you will find more than your share.

Ours is a bountiful land. Let us resolve to live in it, at one with man, with nature, and with God.

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 1:27 P.M. EDT)