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## HISTORY OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT

Enacted 25 years ago, the Clean Air Act is the nation's oldest pollution-control legislation. It is also one of the nation's most effective laws. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Act "may be the most successful environmental program since cities started treating their sewage." This fact sheet briefly summarizes the history of the Clean Air Act.

The 1970 Clean Air Act. In 1970, President Nixon proposed and Congress enacted the original Clean Air Act. The Act was a landmark in environmental policy. For the first time, Congress directed a federal agency (the Environmental Protection Agency) to set national standards to protect the public from pollution. These standards, called National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQSs), were to be strictly health-based. The Act gave states the responsibility to develop State Implementation Plans (SIPs) to meet the new health standards. To assist the states, the 1970 Act also enacted federal technology-forcing standards to reduce motor vehicle emissions, which proved to be highly successful, and directed EPA to promulgate federal risk-based standards to reduce toxic emissions, which proved to be largely unsuccessful.

The 1977 Amendments. In 1977, the Clean Air Act was reauthorized with bipartisan support. The reauthorization added a new program to protect air quality in clean-air areas and provided polluted areas additional time to meet the NAAQSs.

The 1990 Amendments. The 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act were proposed by President Bush and passed by overwhelming majorities in both the House (401 to 25) and the Senate (89 to 10). The 1990 Amendments culminated ten years of congressional debate and controversy, making them one of the longest, most scrutinized, and hardest fought legislative battles in recent history. During this period, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held over 70 days of hearings and heard from hundreds of witnesses -- ultimately resulting in intensive bipartisan negotiations and a bill that passed the Committee 41 to 1.

The 1990 Amendments contained six major programs:

- (1) Title I established a graduated control strategy for attaining the health-based NAAQSs, giving the heaviest polluted areas with the most costly clean-up obligations the longest time to meet the standards;
- (2) Title II tightened the federal motor vehicle standards and established new requirements for cleaner fuels;
- (3) Title III replaced the ineffective risk-based standards for reducing toxic emissions of the 1970 Act with a new technology-based approach advocated by President Bush;
- (4) Title IV created a novel market-based system of tradeable allowances to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from power plants, the principal source of acid rain;
- (5) Title VI enacted measures to protect the stratospheric ozone layer, including a phase-out of ozone-depleting chemicals;
- (6) Title V established a new permit system to improve the enforceability of the Clean Air Act.

The Next Reauthorization. The 1990 Amendments authorized the Clean Air Act through FY 1998. The Act is next due to be reauthorized in FY 1999.