

**Remarks of Governor Christine Todd Whitman,
Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
at
The Business Council
Washington, D.C.**

February 22, 2001

Thank you, Ken (Lay). It's good to be with you this morning.

I'm delighted to be on the same program with my colleagues, Attorney General Ashcroft Secretary Evans, and with Larry Lindsey, the President's economic policy advisor. The way you put this morning's program together shows that you recognize - as President Bush certainly does - that protecting America's environment and strengthening her economy go hand in hand.

I'd like to speak with you for just a few minutes about how we can work together in the months and years ahead to promote both environmental protection and economic prosperity.

It's been more than 30 years now since the EPA was created. Over that time, you've come to know the EPA very well - some might say all too well. As we look over the past three decades, though, I think we can all agree that the work done by the EPA has been enormously important to the success America has enjoyed in cleaning up its air, water, and land.

That success would not have been possible without the hard-working, dedicated, and committed professionals at EPA who care very deeply about protecting America's environment for our children and grandchildren. They are also a great, natural resource worth honoring.

By nearly every measure, our environment is healthier today than it was in 1970. Our air is cleaner, our water purer, and our land better protected. Where we once took our environmental and natural resources for granted, what we now take for granted is how precious they are and how important it is that we protect them.

This did not happen without plenty of hard work and even some pain. I know that members of the business community have long believed that the EPA treated them as the enemy. I also know, however, that there was a time when that sort of relationship was probably necessary. We weren't going to reverse the course of environmental degradation without changing a lot of minds and a lot of attitudes. That kind of change is never easy.

It is also true, however, that we are ready for another kind of change. It's time to leave the command and control model behind. It's time to start seeking and building energetic partnerships for environmental progress.

I come to Washington from one of America's fifty statehouses. My boss, as you know, has followed a similar career path. Let me assure you, serving as a governor gives one a certain perspective on the power and authority of the Federal government. During my seven years as New Jersey's governor I came to learn that Washington can be an important ally as well as an intimidating adversary.

My experience has convinced me that more good gets done – and gets done more effectively and efficiently – when Washington builds partnerships. And rather than dwell on the experience I've had on the receiving end of command and control, I'd like to share with you my experience with an EPA partnership model.

Several years ago, New Jersey was one of the first states selected to join with the EPA in the National Environmental Performance Partnership System – or NEPPS. Very briefly, NEPPS works as follows. Washington tells the state what environmental goals it must meet. Then, the state decides how best to meet those goals.

As governor, I loved NEPPS for two simple reasons. First, because it acknowledged that I was an ally of the EPA in our shared goal of improving New Jersey's environment. Second, it allowed me to develop the means by which we would meet the goals Washington set. Every governor will tell you that they know better than Washington what will – or won't – work in their states. NEPPS gives governors the opportunity to prove that's true.

NEPPS can serve as a model for how EPA should conduct most of its business with the states. I also believe that it can serve as a model for how EPA should interact with business and with all the other stakeholders who seek a place at the table in EPA deliberations. I look forward to building partnerships that reach across traditional boundaries, so that every voice and every concern can be given a fair opportunity to participate and be heard.

There was a time, not too long ago, when the idea of partnering with business in pursuit of environmental protection would have been considered foolish. Thirty years ago, business was seen as the environmental bad guys. I think you would agree, if grudgingly, that reputation was not entirely unearned. But that was then. Today, things are different.

Business and industry have come to understand the importance of protecting the health of their employees and of the people who live near their facilities. They know that they can create jobs, earn profits, and be good employers and good neighbors while also being good stewards.

I believe that the EPA and the business community can work together to define mutual goals and agree upon ways to reach them. Every good business leader will tell you they believe that good environmental practices are also good business practices. I want to give you the opportunity to prove that's true.

That being said, however, let me be clear. I said at my confirmation hearing that we will offer the carrot first, but we will not retire the stick. Those companies that think an invitation to partnership is a license to pollute had better think again. I intend to leave America's environment in better shape than I found it.

These, of course, are issues of process, and as important as process is, it doesn't take the place of sound policy. There are several main policy areas the President has asked me to address in my first months as EPA administrator.

The first is brownfields redevelopment. All across America, too many once viable sites lie barren, producing nothing in the way of economic activity and seeing nothing being done to correct past environmental damage. More often than not, these unproductive, polluted sites are found in places that have enormous potential for economic redevelopment. But due to a variety of reasons not enough progress has been made in transforming brownfields to economically productive uses.

The President laid out during the campaign a very clear agenda for reforming brownfields clean-up and redevelopment. I intend to work very closely with Congress and with all the stakeholders to move this reform plan forward.

Under this reform, EPA will begin by establishing high – but flexible – standards for brownfields cleanup. We will also work to provide redevelopers with protection from federal liability when they cleanup a property under a state program that meets high federal standards. In addition, we will focus the Federal government's efforts on developing effective cleanup techniques and technologies. We will also seek to provide positive economic incentives, including reforming the brownfields revolving loan funds by cutting red tape and providing block grants to the states, and by working to permanently extend the brownfield tax incentive.

These reforms will help the federal government catch up with the more than forty states that have taken a leadership role in making brownfields bloom.

The second policy matter that is on my agenda concerns addressing the clean air challenges America continues to face. One area where I believe we can make real progress concerns emissions from older power plants. Current environmental standards for old versus new power plants are too complex. They have succeeded in tying businesses up in knots but have failed in producing cleaner air. It's time to change that.

I intend to work with the Congress, with my colleague Energy Secretary Spence Abraham, with consumer and environmental groups, and with industry to enact legislation the President proposed during the campaign that will allow what is known as multi-pollutant cap and trade. We will establish mandatory reduction targets for emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury, and carbon dioxide, but we will also provide market-based incentives, such as carbon reduction credits and emissions trading, to help achieve those reductions.

I believe that this sort of program will allow us to improve air quality without driving up the cost, or shrinking the supply, of electricity to American consumers. I also believe that this program can and should be part of America's overall energy strategy. I look forward to working with Secretary Abraham to include multi-pollutant cap and trade in the comprehensive energy program he is developing.

Those of you who are listening carefully probably noticed that I included carbon dioxide a moment ago in my description of what needs to be included in multi-pollutant cap and trade – and that brings me to the issue of global warming.

There is broad consensus that greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide, are being found in increasing concentration in the atmosphere. It is also clear from good, scientific analysis that average temperatures on earth have increased more over the past hundred years than during any other century in the past thousand years. In addition, current scientific models project that the rate of warming in the next century will exceed that of any other similar period in the past 10,000 years.

So there should be no mistake – this Administration takes the challenge of global warming quite seriously. That is why EPA will work hard to develop the good scientific information we need to make prudent and responsible policy decisions. At the same time we will continue to work with you and others to develop the technologies we need to reduce emissions.

Taken all together, these priorities of process and policy at the EPA are designed to achieve one major goal – to leave America's environment cleaner when we're done than it was when we started. That means that over the course of these next four years I will be looking for results.

By results, I don't mean asking whether we've been able to levy more fines, sue more businesses, or punish more state governments than ever before. Instead, I will be asking questions like these: is our air cleaner; is our water purer; is our land being restored?

Those are the true measures of whether EPA is meeting its mission. It's a mission I believe we share, and one I believe we can work together to achieve.

Thank you. Now I would be happy to take your questions.