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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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EARTH DAY

AMERICA AT ENVIRONMENTAL CROSSROADS: DOLE CITES NEED TO IMPROVE SYSTEM FURTHER TO PROTECT HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT WITH LESS COST & COMPLEXITY; CONTINUE PROUD GOP TRADITION OF GOOD SCIENCE, PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP & STATE & LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY

As America marks Earth Day 1996, I would like to remind my friends across the aisle that the environmental heritage we are all so proud of was forged under Republican stewardship. Our Republican environmental heritage stretches back to Ulysses S. Grant, who established Yellowstone as the first of the "crown jewels" of our precious national parks. President Theodore Roosevelt set up the National Wildlife Refuge System and promoted the value of conservation.

Republican Environmental Heritage

It was Republicans, under President Nixon, who created the Environmental Protection Agency and enacted the first Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Under Presidents Ford, Reagan, and Bush, we enacted and implemented the majority of the enabling statutes to protect our environment. An important Clean Air Act revision in 1990, which introduced initiatives like using markets to achieve our goals, has helped to set new directions for the future.

The progress we have made as a nation over the last 25 years deserves praise. We saw problems that needed to be addressed -- setting pollution standards to protect public health and dealing with pollution that crosses state and international boundaries. We responded with laws that I was proud to support -- laws that addressed those problems in the best way we knew then.

We have learned a lot over these 25 years of environmental experience and progress. America's ability to create innovative ways of dealing with environmental protection and, at the same time, have continued economic growth is the envy of the rest of the world. Now we are at a crossroads about how to make further progress. I want to improve the system so it protects people's health and the environment better with less cost and complexity. I want to put more trust in the ability of all Americans -- at all levels of government -- and their desire to do the right thing. The old ways won't help much as we face new problems in the future.

States & Localities Provide Solutions to Environmental Problems

During the last 25 years, the states have become very knowledgeable about the best way to deal with most environmental problems. The states have become laboratories of innovation on better ways to deal with many issues of concern: welfare and health care reform -- and environment as well. California, for example, is leading the way in setting up an integrated approach that calls for simpler permits and dealing with air, water and waste in a coordinated way that goes after the worst problems first. Other states also lead the way.

Wisconsin, for example, has a "brownfields" program in place which allows appropriate clean up for urban areas previously written off for development. That makes good sense and shows a sense of the right priorities.

Eighteen states -- including Kansas, Texas, Indiana, Colorado, and Oregon -- are encouraging their own companies to voluntarily find and fix environmental problems on their own. This is a partnership that works. We should follow that example and encourage rather than punish our communities and businesses for trying to do the right thing.

The states and localities are leading the way in these and other areas. We should use the most appropriate level of government for the problem at hand. Try the local level first, states next. Try regional solutions when environmental issues

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involve more than one state. The federal government should step back when it can and use its expertise when it is most helpful to the states: to provide scientific or technical help.

Farmers, ranchers, businesspeople, families -- all are partners, not villains. We should acknowledge that these people do the right thing every day. Let's measure environmental protection not by the size of a federal bureaucracy or the number of regulations on the books but by the desire of our people to work together to protect the environmental values that we all treasure.

Use Good Science to Set Environmental Priorities

One of the things I have tried to promote this last year was that we must use good science to set environmental priorities, and then we should tackle the most important problems first. We know we could do better. The Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, for example, estimates that 60,000 lives per year could be saved with the same level of spending if we targeted our money at the worst problems.

It takes leadership to make choices. We need to be wiser about what we go after and at what level of responsibility that is done.

Individual Private Property Rights

I want to say one word about individual private property rights, which are so precious that they are protected by the constitution. Owning property is a right that makes us strong and is a powerful force for the environment. If the government takes someone's property for a public purpose, that person should be compensated. If we as a society believe that that person's property is needed for an important purpose, let's make that choice as a nation and ensure that we are not diminishing our citizens' rights.

Common Sense, Environmentally Sensitive Farm Bill

I am proud of what we have done this year on the farm bill. It is the most environmentally sensitive farm bill ever. The conservation title of the farm bill reflects a common sense approach. The bill continues the Conservation Reserve Program, expands the Wetlands Reserve Program, making this program the nation's biggest and most successful environmental effort. In addition, we provided \$300 million to restore the Everglades. This was an immediate response to a need identified by the people of Florida.

The farm bill provides a good example of what we can do in other areas: injecting simplicity, common sense, and flexibility, and lifting the heavy hand of the government. These goals were also met in the safe drinking water act and resulted in a bipartisan bill that passed the Senate 99-0. We have set the same goals for Superfund reform, to get the lawyers out and get sites cleaned up. Yet today, no Democrats have joined us in this effort. We can get things done when we focus on the goals and not the rhetoric.

Today I received a letter from my Democrat colleagues. I share their environmental goals. But there are better ways to achieve these goals. No one is interested in repealing or weakening environmental protections. Years ago, we wrote on typewriters. Today we use computers. Were we rolling back our desire to communicate efficiently by moving from typewriters to computers? I think not. Let's take the same approach on the environment.

That proud tradition and the strong Republican values of personal stewardship, good science, trust in the people and respect for the states and localities will be used to build a better environmental future for our children.

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