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Environmental Report

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The President's Noise Initiative...

On August 2 of this year, President Carter submitted his second message on the environment to Congress, and it established fighting urban noise as one of the Administration's priorities for the 96th Congress. Excerpts follow.

Our cities give us diversity and enjoyment, occupations and avocations, shopping and services, recreation and culture. By strengthening the health of our urban environment, we broaden the range of opportunities open to all of our citizens, as I emphasized in my National Urban Policy Message last year. The investments we make in maintaining and improving urban quality—particularly those involving federal taxpayer dollars—must be designed to meet environmental objectives, such as safe, convenient, well-planned public transportation, quieter communities and assistance in mediating potential conflicts between healthy urban economies and environments. The initiatives I am proposing today will help to achieve these goals...

A certain level of urban noise is tolerable or even agreeable, reflecting the multitude of activities that make a city thrive. However, most of our cities suffer from too much noise. Excessive noise is a serious disturbance in city dwellers' lives and degrades the urban environment.

Since World War II, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of noise sources in our cities. There are more cars, trucks, motorcycles and other vehicles on our streets and highways than ever before. There is more industrial and new construction activity.

The Annual Housing Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census (or HUD shows noise to be the most frequently identified undesirable characteristic of neighborhoods, even more than crime. When compared with other neighborhood conditions, noise ranked second only to crime as a reason for moving out of a neighborhood.

Recent Gallup surveys conducted for the National League of Cities found that "quiet" was an important condition that people desire in their neighborhoods, and that noise pollution ranked on par with air pollution and water pollution as important environmental problems.

Most noise abatement actions are taken by state and local governments, but there is an important role for the federal government. There are a number of federal programs that could be used to aid noise abatement efforts, even though their main purpose is to achieve other goals such as energy conservation or better planning and design of particular types of projects.

I am initiating today a program to reduce urban noise by directing the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, Housing, and Urban Development, Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency and General Services Administration, in consultation with other federal agencies, to take a number of actions to improve existing noise abatement programs, including:

1. Initiate programs to achieve soundproofing and weatherization of noise-sensitive buildings such as schools and hospitals.

This will set up programs, including demonstrations, which will improve our understanding of how we can use existing programs to enhance soundproofing of noise-sensitive buildings. For example, DOE has a \$600 million allocation over a three-year period to provide funding assistance to states to weatherize the nation's schools and hospitals. Weatherization of buildings will also make them more soundproof. DOT expects requests from states for over \$15 million to assist the states in soundproofing of public-use buildings near highways. The administration has submitted legislation to make soundproofing of schools, hospitals and publicly owned health facilities near airports an allowable



President Carter makes announcement in White House east room. White House photo.

cost under the airport trust fund.

2. Promote the use of quiet-design features in the planning, design and operation of proposed urban transportation projects.

This initiative is intended to promote considerations of noise into initial planning and design of urban transportation projects, in order to avoid noise problems after facilities are built. Opportunities to reduce and avoid the noise problems resulting from the development of transportation projects will be identified and promoted. This cooperation will be extended to the transportation projects planned under the DOT urban initiatives program.

3. Encourage noise sensitive developments, such as housing, to be located away from major noise sources.

... and A Senator's Response

by John C. Culver

I applaud the president's recognition in his environmental message of noise as a serious environmental problem and the actions he is recommending to reduce excessive levels of noise.

As chairman of the Senate resource protection subcommittee, I believe we need to enhance our community assistance programs such as ECHO and the assistance grants under the Quiet Communities Act of 1978. This legislation, which I introduced in 1978, helped to re-focus our noise control efforts on community programs.

We are just now learning how noise affects both our insidious effects of unacceptable noise levels will be more adequately understood as additional studies are done.

In addition, the efforts of the federal government to control noise levels around airports should be strengthened. Aircraft noise is a major source of psychological and physiological stress, and we should continue to examine ways to reduce it.

John C. Culver is a U.S. Senator from Iowa.

This initiative is designed to consolidate federal assistance in states and localities for incorporation of noise considerations in local development planning and site review operations. This will involve the consolidation of federal guidance and the coordination of direct technical assistance. The housing programs of HUD, VA and FmHA will be reviewed by the committee to consolidate their noise abatement policies, procedures and guidance.

3. Help federal, state and local agencies buy quiet equipment and products. This initiative is a "Buy Quiet" program in which the federal government and participating states and local governments will purchase quiet models of products and equipment they use. This program enhances the development of new technology for the commercial development of quiet products. Participants include the National League of Cities and the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. In this program, the federal government and a consortium of states and local governments will spearhead the effort through buy quiet procurements of individual products. Other federal agencies, states and local governments which follow their lead will increase the market and provide an additional incentive for industry to produce and market these quiet products.

4. Support neighborhood self-reliance efforts seeking to address local noise problems.

This initiative is a Quiet Neighborhood Self-Help Program in which local action-oriented neighborhood organizations undertake self-help noise reduction activities in their neighborhoods and assist in the development and implementation of local noise programs. The program is being conducted in cooperation with the National Association of Neighborhoods, EPA and HUD.

5. Implementation

The Federal Interagency Committee on Noise, chaired by the administrator of EPA, shall coordinate the implementation of this program. The chairman of my Interagency Coordinating Council will assist the interagency committee and other intergovernmental cooperative efforts to assure that this program is carried out fully and promptly, including consultation with state and local governments.

The administrator of EPA will report to the chairman of CEQ and the director of OMB on the progress of this new program in six months (due February 2, 1980) and in one year (due August 2, 1980).



Sen. John Culver