Opposition Blasts Bush Environmental Record

In a radio address this past weekend, Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.), Chairman of the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee, blasted President George W. Bush for moving backwards on the environment, by putting special interests above public health, clean air and safe water.

"This year the power industry is getting a nice Christmas gift - the biggest weakening of the Clean Air Act in history," Jeffords said. "Think about this: 2,500 Americans face premature death from power plant pollution each month. That's like suffering casualties from Pearl Harbor every 30 days."

Jeffords noted the Bush administration's efforts to roll back protections for clean air and water, cut Superfund site cleanups, approve new oil and gas drilling on national lands and make it more difficult for citizens to learn about dangerous chemicals stored near their homes. In addition, the administration has often announced such changes at times that bode the least media and public attention. For example, last week's news of changes in forest management plans on 192 million acres of national forests and grasslands was revealed just before Thanksgiving break.

The environment needn't be a partisan issue, Jeffords noted, reminding listeners that Bush's father had worked with Democrats and Independents to secure environmental protections in the Clean Air Act a dozen years ago. "Now this President Bush insists on moving us backward, undoing his father's legacy and weakening our nation's environmental laws," he said.

With Republicans now holding the majority in the Senate, Jeffords (whose departure from the Republican camp gave Democrats control last year) will cede the committee's chairmanship to Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, who has criticized environmental protection laws and called for a weakening of the Clean Air Act. "When Congress convenes next year," Jeffords said, "I fear the attacks on our environment will accelerate. Hopefully moderates in both parties can do what we've done before: stand up to block these anti-environmental initiatives and instead pursue policies that protect and respect our environment. After all, our environmental policy shouldn't be about protecting special interests. It should be about protecting the air and land and water that are every America's birthright."
For the complete story from the Associated Press [click here](11/30/02).

**More Links:**

- Editorial: **Policy Changes Benefit Industry** by The Advocate, Baton Rouge, La. (12/02/02)
- **Mandate for the Middle** by Sen. Jim Jeffords - New York Times op-ed (11/30/02)
- **Bush Forest Plan Draws Harsh Criticism** - Associated Press article (11/28/02)
- **Ignoring Health Risks, EPA to Authorize Air Pollution Increases Nationwide** (11/22/02)