

RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

RECORD GROUP 14

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

OF FEBRUARY 15, 1959

RELATING TO

POLLUTION ABATEMENT LEGISLATION

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, 1958

2-16-39
P.O. (Halls)
Room
Commiss

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

The last Congress recognized the national importance of pollution abatement in our streams and lakes by passing, during its closing days, an act providing for the creation of a Division of Water Pollution Control in the United States Public Health Service and for the establishment of a permanent system of Federal grants-in-aid and loans to assist in constructing pollution-abatement projects. Although fully subscribing to the general purposes of that act, I felt compelled to withhold my approval of it because of the method which it provided for the authorization of loans and grants-in-aid. It would have prevented the consideration of such appropriations as a part of the annual budget for all purposes. My reasons are set forth in detail in my memorandum of June 25, 1938. I hope that at this session the whole problem of water pollution may again receive your attention.

To facilitate study of the problem by the Congress, I am transmitting a report on "Water Pollution in the United States", which outlines the status of pollution, the cost of bringing about a reasonable degree of abatement, and the financial, technical, and administrative aspects of such a program. The document was prepared at my request by a special advisory committee of the National Resources Committee composed of representative experts from the Departments of War, Treasury, the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce, and from private and state agencies.

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No quick and easy solution of these problems is in sight. The Committee estimates that an expenditure by public and private agencies of approximately two billion dollars over a period of ten to twenty years may be required to construct works necessary to abate the more objectional pollution. Inasmuch as the needed works are chiefly treatment plants for municipal sewage and industrial waste, the responsibility for them rests primarily with municipal government and private industry. Much construction work is in progress. Many State agencies have forced remedial action where basic studies have shown it to be practicable.

Unprecedented advances in cleaning up our streams have been made possible by the public works and work-relief programs during the past six years. The report states that more progress has been made in abatement of municipal waste during that period than during the entire twenty-five years preceding, chiefly as a result of Federal financial stimulation. As in many other fields of conservation, great improvement in the Nation's basic assets of water has been incident to the fight against unemployment. If this construction work is to continue at a substantial rate, and if the necessary research, education, and enforcement activities are to be carried out most effectively, the Federal Government must lend financial support and technical stimulation.

It is my opinion that pending further experimentation with interstate and state enforcement activities, Federal participation in pollution-abatement should take the general form of establishing a central technical agency to promote

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and coordinate education, research, and enforcement. On the basis of recent experience, it should be supplemented by a system of Federal grants-in-aid and loans organized with due regard for the integrated use and control of water resources, and for a balanced Federal program for public works of all types. The time is overdue for the Federal Government to take vigorous leadership along these lines.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

THE WHITE HOUSE,

February 15 1939.