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Press Release - Muskie Hails 'Strong, Tough, Air Pollution Control Agreement'

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FOR RELEASE

IMMEDIATELY
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MUSKIE HAILS 'STRONG, TOUGH, AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AGREEMENT'

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) said today that the clean air bill produced by a House-Senate conference committee "faces the air pollution crisis with urgency and in candor."

In a speech on the Senate floor, Mr. Muskie termed the agreement "strong" and "tough," adding that "it makes hard choices, provides just remedies, requires stiff penalties."

The measure "intends that all Americans in all parts of the country shall have clean air to breathe within the 1970s..."

"The conferees' agreement, no less than the Senate bill, calls for the money and the manpower required to clean up the air. A three-fold increase in manpower and a total of \$1.1 billion in funding over three years are authorized," Senator Muskie said.

He added that he is "convinced that nothing short of this kind of commitment to the fight against dirty air, against environmentally-induced disease, will be enough."

The most controversial section of the bill centered on its requirement that auto makers meet a January 1, 1975 deadline for building a car which reduces by 90 per cent the carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions of 1970 models. The administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency could grant a one-year extension of that deadline but following that, only Congress could authorize extensions.

Senator Muskie said in his floor statement that this deadline will draw "repeated interpretation and misinterpretation," adding that "the Senate did not get all that it wanted here. The Senate conferees had to accept two major changes in order to preserve the deadlines in the Senate bill and to obtain conference agreement."

"First, the House insisted that an application for suspension from the effect of the deadline must be made earlier than 24 months before the effective date of the standard in question. Second, the Administrator is required to make this decision within sixty days after receipt of such an application for suspension."

On the other hand, Senator Muskie said, two improvements were made. "First, the Administrator no longer can be forced to rely upon the auto manufacturer to determine whether technology is available. He must test engine systems developed by private parties to ascertain whether they meet standards; thus, all available technology will be known..."

In addition, each manufacturer must apply for any suspension, meaning "that the lack of technology or the lead time to the smaller companies cannot be used as a justification for suspension by the major manufacturers."

Mr. Muskie said that growing public interest in air pollution helped strengthen the chances for a tough air bill. "People became involved in the standards-setting process. They learned of the threats to their health and they sought to make the program responsive to their needs," he said.
