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## **Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Air Pollution for Audio News Service**

Edmund S. Muskie

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January 20, 1964

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In December, President Johnson signed into law the first legislative measure designed to launch a national attack on the national problem of air pollution. The Special Senate Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution, of which I am Chairman, is in the process of holding hearings on local air pollution problems in Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, Boston, Wheeling, West Virginia, Tampa, Florida, and New York. Our purpose will be to gain first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by local and state air pollution agencies.

These hearings serve to emphasize the scope and serious nature of our nation's air pollution problems. Few Americans realize that the contamination of pure air by poisonous gases is more than an annoyance. Air pollution can kill. Air pollution can destroy.

Air pollution has killed. In London during December of 1962, at least 340 persons died from ailments aggravated by a thick blanket of polluted smog which hung over the city for several weeks. Air pollution has been an important factor in several large-scale plane and auto crashes. Air and ground visibility in large American cities continues to be blurred by excessive quantities of pollutants in the air.

Air pollution has destroyed. Last year an estimated \$11 billion in U. S. property damage could be traced to the effects of air pollution. Paint peeling off the side of buildings, destruction of farm crops, corrosion of metals, cracking of rubber and leather -- all are caused by excessive air pollution.

Congress has recognized that the Federal Government, along with State and local governments, must shoulder a part of the burden. While primary responsibility remains at the local and State levels, there are situations

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where the Federal government can be of help.

The Clean Air Act represents a constructive contribution to the solution of air pollution control problems.

Among the provisions included in the Act are encouragement of cooperative activities between State and local governments for air pollution control, expansion of the present air pollution program of the U. S. Public Health Service, including grants for research on the sources, nature and effects of air pollution; grants to air pollution control agencies throughout the country; and the expanding the role of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the initiation, expansion and improvement of local and regional pollution control programs.

As President Johnson stated, this bill will enable us "to halt the trend towards greater contamination of our atmosphere, to control industrial waste discharged into the air, and to eliminate dangerous haze and smog." It is a necessary and effective weapon in society's fight against needless property damage and environmental health hazards.

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