

**Testimony of S. William Becker
on behalf of the
State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators
and the
Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials
before the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies
regarding the
FY 2004 Budget of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
April 9, 2003**

I am Bill Becker, the Executive Director of STAPPA and ALAPCO, two national associations of state and local air pollution control agencies in 54 states and territories and over 165 major metropolitan areas across the United States. These agencies have the primary responsibility under the Clean Air Act for implementing our nation's clean air program. Thank you for this opportunity to testify about EPA's FY 2004 budget, particularly grants to state and local air pollution control agencies under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act.

The President's FY 2004 budget proposes a \$5 million increase above last year's level in grants to state and local air pollution control agencies. While we appreciate this modest increase -- about 2% of the total grant program -- this amount is not sufficient to support our vital air quality efforts. Furthermore, the increase is earmarked for a specific purpose -- air toxics monitoring -- so it will not support any of the other extremely important clean air initiatives that are in great need of additional funding, as well. In fact, according to a survey we have

undertaken, state and local air pollution control agencies face a funding shortfall of about \$100 million in order to perform all of their responsibilities under the federal Clean Air Act.

We recommend that federal grants to state and local air quality agencies be increased by \$25 million above the President's request, which is only a fraction of the amount that is actually needed.

We are very aware that you face tremendous budgetary pressures, mostly due to homeland security and the war in Iraq. As such, many programs cannot be funded as robustly as needed. However, with these budget constraints, it becomes more critical that you allocate these scarce resources to those programs that present the greatest opportunities for reducing threats to public health and the environment. If you do this, you will conclude that no other environmental problem presents *greater* risks than air pollution.

In spite of improvements in air quality over the past 30 years, huge problems still remain. Literally, tens of thousands of people die each year from exposure to fine particulate, or soot. Over 170 million tons of pollution is emitted into the air each year across the United States. One hundred and thirty-three million people live in areas of the country that violate at least one of the six health-based air quality standards, not to mention the many millions of people who are exposed to toxic air pollutants that cause cancer and other health problems.

The effect of air pollution on the nation's population is very damaging, especially for one of our most sensitive and precious populations – our children. EPA recently published a study entitled, *America's Children and the Environment*, which contains highly disturbing information, such as:

- in 2001, nearly 40 percent of children lived in counties that exceeded the eight-hour ozone (or smog) standard and about 25 percent lived in counties that exceeded the fine particulate matter standard;
- between 1980 and 1995, the percentage of children with asthma doubled and, by 2001, nearly 9 percent of all children had asthma; and
- in 1996, *all* children lived in counties in which the estimated concentrations of hazardous air pollutants exceeded the 1-in-100,000 cancer risk benchmark.

Clearly, the magnitude of the air quality problem demonstrates that significantly increased funding for the control of air pollution should be a top priority.

We asked our members how they would spend additional grants. They identified a list of worthy activities for which they need additional resources, including the following, just to mention a few:

- developing strategies to meet our health-based air quality standards;
- improving emission inventories of toxic air pollution;
- increasing the frequency of inspections;
- expanding monitoring, including adding locations and replacing outdated equipment;
- improving risk assessment capabilities;
- reducing concentrations of fine particulates;
- increasing public outreach efforts;

- improving small business compliance assistance; and
- improving modeling and other estimation tools.

Many of the activities for which additional grants are needed are the foundation of our air quality program and are, therefore, essential. Without additional federal grants, and the flexibility to target them to the activities that are most appropriate in individual states and communities, we will find it increasingly difficult to obtain and maintain healthful air quality.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend that you mitigate the severe budget gap that state and local air agencies face and provide an additional \$25 million above the President's FY 2004 budget request.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you have.