

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

March 22, 2001

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
March 22, 2001

On behalf of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators (STAPPA) and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (ALAPCO), thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY 2002 budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, particularly regarding grants to state and local air pollution control agencies under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act.

STAPPA and ALAPCO are the national associations representing air quality officials in 54 states and territories and more than 165 metropolitan areas across the United States. Under the Clean Air Act, state and local air quality officials have the primary responsibility for implementing our country's clean air program on behalf of our citizens. This extremely complex and diverse program requires state and local air agencies to address particulate matter, ground-level ozone, toxic air pollution, acid rain and other types of air pollutants, many of which cause significant adverse health effects, including cancer, severe respiratory ailments and premature death. Air agencies must continue to carry out the core elements of our programs, which serve as the foundation of our nation's clean air effort, while, at the same time and with the same staff and resources, address new initiatives that focus on emerging problems.

Before I begin to discuss the budget for FY 2002, I wish to thank you on behalf of STAPPA and ALAPCO for the language you included in the FY 2001 Appropriations Committee report addressing EPA expenditure of state and local air grants. In that language, you instructed EPA to refrain from withholding state and local grant funds for expenditure directly by EPA at the national level unless the agency first obtained the concurrence of state and local air agencies. In past years, EPA had unilaterally set aside and spent portions of Section 105 air grants to support activities that should have been funded through EPA's own budget (i.e., not federal grant funds intended for state and local air agencies). The language you inserted in last year's report led to a successful

process in which EPA consulted with STAPPA and ALAPCO with respect to the allocation of FY 2001 grants – in particular those national set-asides – and resulted in a satisfactory agreement about which EPA expenditures are appropriately funded by state and local air grants. We hope this process of consultation and concurrence will continue in FY 2002 and the future.

Additionally, we are extremely grateful to this subcommittee and the full committee for including an increase of \$11 million for state and local air grants under the State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) account and \$3 million for state and local grants for the development of regional haze programs last year. While the final appropriations for FY 2001 did not include all of these increases, we certainly appreciate the commitment to clean air that you have shown through your efforts to increase air grants.

With respect to FY 2002, we realize that the details of the President's proposed budget are not yet publicly available. Therefore, we are not in a position to comment on and offer suggested changes to specific provisions contained in the budget, as we would ordinarily do. However, we would like to offer some general observations and recommendations related to resources for air quality programs.

STAPPA and ALAPCO hope that, regardless of what the Administration recommends, Congress will recognize the severe budget shortfall facing state and local air agencies and will provide as much additional funding as possible for the state and local air grants program under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act.

AIR POLLUTION IS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM

In spite of our best efforts, air pollution still presents a pervasive national public health and environmental problem. In fact, the health risks from exposure to air pollution are significant and far exceed those from almost every other environmental medium. Nearly 50 million people live in areas of the country where ozone levels exceed the health-based national standards. Fine particulates also present a serious threat to millions of citizens and cause thousands of respiratory-related illnesses and premature deaths each year. More hazardous pollutants are discharged into the air than are released to surface water, ground water and land *combined*. In view of the importance of what is at stake – public health – and the difficulty and complexity of the task we still face, it is critical that we focus the necessary resources on ensuring that the air our citizens breathe is clean.

The magnitude of the national problem posed by air pollution and the tremendous risk to public health this problem presents demonstrate clearly that our nation's air program budget warrants far more resources than are currently being appropriated. No matter what efforts we make to address air pollution, and in spite of any innovations or plans we develop, we will not reach our goal – healthful air quality – without adequate funds. We believe increased funding for the air program should be a top priority – commensurate with the relative environmental risk.

STATE AND LOCAL AIR AGENCIES NEED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A few years ago, STAPPA, ALAPCO and EPA conducted a collaborative effort to assess funding needs, which concluded that federal grants to state and local air pollution control agencies under Section 105 of the Clean Air Act continue to fall short by nearly \$100 million each year. Unless the FY 2002 budget includes significant increases over recent years, state and local air agencies will continue to face a serious funding shortfall that would impede our ability to address the important public health problems throughout the country that result from air pollution.

On what would we spend additional resources? Increased grants would help to support many activities. For example, there is much that still must be done to address toxic or hazardous air pollution. We must assess the extent of the problem through monitoring and data analysis, implement technology-based (or MACT) standards, develop strategies for addressing national and local problems, and issue permits to many minor sources (an expensive undertaking that is *not* covered by permit fees under Title V of the Clean Air Act), among other things. In addition to toxic air pollution, we must continue to address criteria pollutants, such as ozone and particulate matter, and regional haze and visibility. In fact, the list of our responsibilities for which additional funds are necessary is long and includes, among others, the following: transportation-related projects; land use and air quality programs; compliance assistance programs, especially for small businesses; development, replacement and/or upgrading of monitors (apart from fine particulate matter monitoring); collection of essential emission and pollutant data; minor source inspections and permits; training; implementation of ozone strategies; multi-state approaches to regional air quality problems; and public education and outreach.

As we work to confront our air quality problems, we grow in our understanding of the nature of air pollution. This experience has allowed us to better define the issues we face and to recognize that the air quality problems before us are different from those of the past and will require new solutions. While many of the approaches that have served us well in the past will continue to play an essential role, it is imperative that we also explore new strategies to augment our programs and add more tools to our repertoire. These innovative strategies, including additional flexibility for both state and local agencies and the regulated community, which the new Administration strongly supports, do not come without a price. The development and implementation of these new and flexible innovative strategies will also require significant resources.

EPA'S BUDGET

During decades of air pollution control, state and local governments have gained substantial experience and expertise to employ in our quest for clean air. They have learned a great deal about the science of air pollution, the technology of control and strategies for addressing local problems. As a result, state and local agencies welcome the flexibility to craft and tailor programs that will best suit our needs. However, we cannot solve the problems related to air pollution alone; we need EPA to perform those

duties that are best suited to a federal agency. It is only through federal, state and local cooperation that we will succeed. Accordingly, we welcome and support a strong federal role in the national air quality program.

Among the responsibilities EPA has undertaken and upon which we will continue to rely are establishing (and revising) strong national standards for certain pollutants, industries and sources, including motor vehicles; developing national guidance, conducting research, providing training and carrying out appropriate enforcement activities. As a federal agency with a national perspective, EPA is best suited to these tasks.

In order for EPA to fulfill its responsibilities with respect to the air program, it needs to be adequately funded as well. We urge Congress, therefore, not to reduce EPA's budget, since decreasing EPA's ability to carry out its programs will adversely affect the job state and local air agencies are able to do. In fact, we believe EPA's air quality budget should be increased to allow the agency to fulfill its responsibilities the way the Clean Air Act intended.

One example is related to enforcement. There have been reports that state grants for enforcement may be increased in FY 2002. We support such increases. However, we also believe EPA's enforcement budget should be robust as well, providing sufficient funds for important enforcement activities (e.g., enforcing consent decrees against heavy-duty diesel manufacturers). We would not want the national enforcement program to suffer – both EPA and state/local grants need to be adequate.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we strongly urge you to ensure that state and local air agencies receive significant increases in grant funding in FY 2002 and that EPA programs are adequately funded as well.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to provide you with our testimony. Please contact us if you have questions or require any additional information.