

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**STATEMENT OF JUDITH E. AYRES,
NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES,
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
JULY 25, 2001**

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am honored to have the opportunity to appear before this Committee to seek your confirmation to serve as the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Assistant Administrator for the Office of International Activities. It is a distinct honor to have been nominated by President George Bush and to have the support of Governor Christine Todd Whitman. If the Senate confirms my nomination, I also look forward to working closely with the members of this Committee, and other members of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

I believe that the Office of International Activities in EPA is a place where a common understanding and approach can be developed to address the many global environmental problems that confront us. If confirmed, I pledge to use my experience and talented staff to promote a spirit of environmental stewardship which reflects Administration priorities.

Regarding my experience, with an academic background in the biological sciences and public administration, I have worked in the environmental area, both in the public and private sectors, since the 1970s. My work has spanned from Washington, D.C. to Alaska and the Pacific Rim, and into Central Europe, Mexico and Central America. The issues addressed have been numerous and varied, from the preservation of sea turtles and bird habitat to cholera outbreaks and Superfund. I have been privileged to work both at the U.S. Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. As Regional Administrator for EPA Region IX (1983-88), I managed a staff of some 950 career civil servants and a budget of \$350 million, heading an office that was responsible for regulating air and water pollution and hazardous waste in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Native American Tribes under U.S. law, and the American Protectorates in the Pacific. The Regional Administrator's office also managed international programs with Mexico.

Today, in seeking the Committee's confirmation, I offer as qualifications my academic background, my public and private sector environmental experience, and my record in both venues as a proven and fair manager committed to doing the public's business in a public way in pursuit of the Administration's environmental priorities.

Environmental protection and gain are at the heart of EPA's major program areas. Each program carries an essential international dimension: addressing air pollution, water pollution, solid and hazardous waste, toxic chemicals, emergency response and pesticides. The international dimension is

important because we know that what goes on in backyards half-way around the world may also end up in our own.

For example,

- C transboundary air pollution emanating from Asia can affect air quality on our western shores;
- C protection of the Rio Grande and the Great Lakes requires cooperation with Mexico and Canada;
- C disposal of hazardous waste is governed by our agreements with industrialized countries around the world;
- C the new treaty on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), which Governor Whitman recently signed in Stockholm, addresses health and environmental problems of pesticides, industrial chemicals and industrial by-products;
- C imported food consumed by children and other vulnerable populations can be contaminated by pesticides banned in the U.S. for health reasons but are still in use in other food-producing countries; and
- C international trade and investment rules and environmental rules will require careful attention to assure that they are mutually supportive.

In short, it is increasingly difficult to protect human health and the environment in the United States without simultaneously engaging with other countries to do the same.

As a nation, we have learned that solving global environmental problems related to the atmosphere, the oceans, and the earth's biological wealth requires concentrated international efforts. For the International Office at EPA, environmental gain is sought in the international arena outside our country's boundaries through the Agency's collaboration with the Congress, other federal agencies, scientists, the financial and business communities, NGOs, and philanthropic leaders.

I would also offer comments on the people of the Office of International Activities. This is an exceptionally talented, dedicated and professional group of public servants who seek a well-managed office with challenging and interesting work, the resources to get it done, and a work environment that is fair and equitable. President Bush, Governor Whitman, and I commit both to the Committee and to the Office of International Activities that going forward, the office will be well-managed, all managers and employees will be held accountable, the work will be challenging, and the work environment will be fair and equitable.

In closing, I have chosen to seek confirmation and re-enter public service because I believe public service to be the noblest of professions and I believe protection of the environment, in all its many dimensions, to be the most vital of endeavors.

Thank you. I shall be pleased to answer any questions you may have.