

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM (BILL) L. WEHRUM
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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE
APRIL 5, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Jeffords, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today as the nominee for the position of Assistant Administrator of Air and Radiation at the United States Environmental Protection Agency. I am grateful to President Bush for nominating me for this position and I appreciate your consideration.

I am pleased to see so many friends and colleagues here today. I am especially pleased to be joined by my wife, my mother, my two sisters, and my nieces and nephews.

President Bush has provided consistent and clear expectations to Administrator Johnson and EPA – to accelerate the pace of environmental progress while maintaining our Nation's economic competitiveness. We have taken this task to heart at my time at EPA, and I am proud of what we have accomplished.

The air is cleaner today than it has been in generations. EPA programs have resulted in a substantial reduction in air pollution and correspondingly dramatic improvements in air quality. Much of this progress is attributable to the good work of those who came before us over the last 35 years. But, under the leadership of President Bush, my predecessor, and the tireless efforts of EPA career staff, we have made significant progress during my tenure.

Perhaps highest on our list of accomplishments is the Clean Air Interstate Rule. This standard will reduce emissions from power plants by millions of tons, help solve some of the toughest and most persistent air quality problems in the Nation, and deliver the largest health benefits of any EPA rule in more than a decade. Other notable rules include the Clean Air Mercury Rule, the Clean Air Visibility Rule, and the non-road diesel engine rule. These rules will assure continued, significant progress toward cleaning our air. If confirmed, I promise to build upon these successes.

Mr. Chairman, I am appreciative of this Committee's efforts to pass Clear Skies legislation. Similar to the President and Administrator Johnson, I believe enactment of legislation to reduce and cap emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury for power plants is a priority and I intend to work to that end. Other near-term priorities will include the Renewable Fuel Standard, a standard for locomotive and marine engines, and the reviews of the particulate matter, ozone, and lead national ambient air quality standards.

My priorities also will include the continued growth of our many successful voluntary and public/private partnership programs. Perhaps the best example is the Energy Star program. Last year alone, Americans with the help of Energy Star prevented the release of 334 million metric

tons of greenhouse gas emissions – equivalent to the emissions from 23 million vehicles – and saved about \$12 billion on their utility bills. These programs are particularly noteworthy because they accomplish significant improvements in human health and the environment, but do so in a collaborative way rather than through our usual regulatory approach.

All of these efforts will be guided by the goal of protecting human health and the environment, but doing so in the smartest and most efficient way possible.

I believe that I am well qualified for this position. I started my career as a chemical engineer. Most of my time was spent in a specialty chemical plant. I had responsibility for implementing the multitude of health, safety, and environmental rules that applied to our operations. I became acutely aware of the value of clear and concise rules, which are particularly important to the operators, engineers, and maintenance crews directly responsible for the actions needed for day to day compliance. I also experienced first hand the frustration and challenge of decoding complicated rules that sometimes seemed to be written without apparent understanding of the real consequences for those required to implement them in the field.

This work inspired me to pursue a law degree, which I obtained by attending classes at night while still working in the plant during the day. I was fortunate to have the opportunity after graduation to come to Washington to work with two top-flight law firms. I learned not only the business of law, but also the complex legal and policy questions that drive the regulatory process. I worked extensively with EPA and came to appreciate the dedication and energy that motivates EPA employees and moves our nation towards continued environmental progress.

I was given the opportunity to join EPA in 2001. I came on board as Counsel to the Assistant Administrator of Air and Radiation. In that capacity, I had the privilege of advancing some of the greatest environmental issues of our day. I consider it a rare privilege to now have the opportunity to serve as the Assistant Administrator.

I will close by saying that I have an avid interest in clean air by both vocation and avocation. Running is one of my few pastimes that has survived the last several years of engineering, law school, law practice, and government service. I run well over 1000 miles in a typical year. Most of this takes place within inches of major roadways here in the DC area. I can tell you that this experience has indelibly impressed upon me the need and value of clean air. The occasional smoking truck or bus and the occasional smoking stack are stark reminders to me of the progress we have made and the challenges that remain.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I am happy to answer any questions you have.