

that their mercury proposal would take well beyond 2025.

The proposal is designed to mirror the President's Clear Skies initiative. Clear Skies is a classic case of chutzpah, a triumph of marketing over substance, if I have ever heard one.

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In July 2003, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) and I wrote to President Bush asking him to correct the claim made in the State of the Union address that his plan would mandate a 70 percent cut in air pollution from power plants by 2018. It was not true. In fact, the underlying EPA modeling made it clear that the reductions that the President proposed would not be achieved until years after 2018. We simply asked the President to get back to us and study by what date his proposal would actually reach that 69 or 70 percent reduction. Jeffrey Holmstead responded to our letter for the EPA and he wrote, "The presence of banking will likely result in some undercontrol for a short period of time after the decline." If he knew that the goal was not going to be achieved, that the proposal would result in undercontrol, how could he be surprised today by the agency's predictions that 70 percent reductions would not come true when they said they would?

These reductions are really embarrassing. I am going to go on shortly to talk about some of the evidence out there that is absolutely compelling that, in fact, we can clean up, in most cases, 90 percent of the pollution from utilities burning coal with existing technology. We can get very, very close to that standard in a relatively short period of time.

What I would like to do is to stop my remarks for the moment, to which I will come back, and thank the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for being with me here today to discuss the Bush administration's failure to come up with a reasonable proposal to regulate mercury emissions from power plants.

I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here this afternoon and I thank my colleague from Maine for being willing to come to the floor and talk about a very serious issue.

I also applaud my colleagues for their hard work in bringing us together this afternoon, I think there will be others, to talk about a serious public health crisis that our country faces. That crisis is caused by mercury pollution. It is not only a national problem, it is also a very local one as well. The State of Texas leads the Nation in mercury pollution. Mercury emission from power plants is the major culprit. These plants dumped 8,968 pounds in 2001 alone. As a result, the whole gulf coast region has been placed under a con-

sumption advisory. Our major fishing lakes are subject to such advisories.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Texas are urging us to take prompt and effective action to clean up mercury pollution from power plants. The Environmental Protection Agency's current proposals on mercury fall far short of what the law requires. The agency's proposals fail to protect the health of our children and our environment. This is especially true for Texas, where mercury emissions would increase, not decrease, under the proposed plan. We ask the EPA to carry out the requirements of the Clean Air Act to protect our Nation from toxic mercury contamination. We urge the agency to impose a 90 percent reduction in the mercury leaching from coal-burning power plants.

Last year, EPA proposed two alternative rules to address mercury emissions. Unfortunately, both of these proposals failed to meet clean air directives under section 112(d) for cleaning up mercury. EPA's proposals permit far more mercury pollution, and for years longer, than the Clean Air Act allows. This is playing games with the health of our Nation. Time and again scientists around the world have proven the toxicity of mercury. The agency's own scientists just released a study finding that approximately 630,000 infants, as my colleague said earlier, that were born in the United States in the dawn of this millennium had blood mercury levels higher than what is considered safe. This is a doubling of previous estimates.

Mercury emissions have also contaminated 10 million acres of lakes and 400,000 miles of streams. Soaring mercury levels have triggered advisories warning America's 41 million recreational fishermen that the fish they catch may not be safe to eat. Furthermore, evidence continues to mount that mercury causes reproductive problems in wildfowl populations such as loon and mallard ducks. Other fish-eating wildlife populations are at risk as well.

Mr. Speaker, we can address this public health and environmental problem if we just would do it. According to many States, industry experts and past EPA analyses, the technology to dramatically clean up these plants is available and affordable. I am concerned that EPA does not fully analyze the range of controls recommended by State utility and environmental and public health members of EPA's advisory group on this rule. I do not know what is holding EPA hostage, but once again they are failing to fulfill its responsibility to adopt standards that protect the public health and environment.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to call on EPA to develop appropriate mercury standards that reduce mercury emissions in the shortest time possible to protect public health and the environment. I thank my colleague for this opportunity to make a statement on this issue.

Mr. ALLEN. I thank my friend from Texas and I appreciate her willingness to engage in this issue and take a leadership role in trying to protect our citizens from the effects of mercury pollution.

I want to go back to the issue that we always hear about whenever we wind up talking about new kinds of environmental controls on a toxic pollutant. Industry always says, "It's too expensive, we can't do it" every single time. But the reduction levels that are proposed by the EPA are really embarrassing for our country. In February, the Southern Company, one of the largest mercury emitters in the world, announced that recently installed mercury control technologies at the Ernest Gaston coal plant in Alabama are removing about 80 percent of the mercury right now. Right now. They are very, very close to that 90 percent standard that would be the goal. The company's experts noted that this would barely comply with some draft versions of a MACT standard, a maximum achievable control technology standard, but they are complying. They are there. Furthermore, EPA's own data shows that most modern coal-fired power plants can and do achieve greater than 90 percent control of mercury and other toxic chemicals.

According to both industry and Department of Energy pilot tests and testimony in front of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, 90 percent reductions in mercury emissions are feasible and economical today. We are not suggesting they should be imposed today. There needs to be some time. But this could all be done between now and 2007 or 2008 and be completely feasible.

The data from EPA's interim report on the control of mercury from coal-fired boilers demonstrates that power plants with fabric filters and wet scrubbers are capturing over 90 percent of their mercury when bituminous coal is burned. There are a number of technical ways in which you can actually collect mercury. Carbon injection and a compact hybrid particulate collector baghouse, so-called, is one way of achieving the goal. Other industries like hospitals and city waste incinerators have been required to meet that 90 percent standard for over a decade.

In February of this year, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD) and I both wrote to the Bush administration asking that Maine people be given the opportunity to comment on EPA's proposed mercury emissions rules. There is a reason why those of us in Maine are particularly concerned about it. There is four times as much mercury in the feathers of loons in Maine as there is in the feathers of loons in Oregon. The wind blows west to east. It always has and it always will. Coming particularly out of those coal-fired power plants in the Midwest, mercury emissions are traveling east and northeast and contaminating many of our most scenic areas in the