

**Blue Skies Alliance*Clear the Air*Clean Air Trust
Louisiana Bucket Brigade*Environmental Awareness Group
Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition
Refinery Reform Project**

For Immediate Release

For Information: Frank O'Donnell 202-785-9625
202-262-6026 (cell)
Pete Altman 512-589-7879

SMOKE FROM THE TOXIC TRIANGLE:

How Big Industry's Pet Politicians Are Choking Our Clean Air Laws

(Washington, D.C. March 11, 2003) – They consistently vote against clean air. They receive huge campaign contributions from big polluting industries. And now these same “Filthy Four” lawmakers are leading the charge for the Bush Administration’s effort to weaken the Clean Air Act, according to a new report by environmentalists.

The report points out that this small congressional clique from the “Toxic Triangle” states of Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma is in charge of Congressional clean-air policy. And, based on their past performance, public health is at risk.

“What we have here is a perfect storm for big polluters. It may be their once-in-a-generation chance to sink the Clean Air Act. And their dirty-air allies in Congress are steering the ship onto the rocks,” said Pete Altman, executive director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition of Texas and author of the report. “What will happen in this Congress could shape the regulatory landscape for clean air for a generation,” Altman said, adding, “It should be of great concern that these ‘Toxic Triangle’ lawmakers are the champions of the Bush Administration’s pollution plan. Collectively they have raked in millions of bucks from big polluters in just the past several years – and they consistently vote in favor of the polluters – and against the breathers.”

Altman noted that three of the four in question – Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA) and Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) chair Congressional panels with purview over the Clean Air Act. All three have introduced the Bush Administration plan to weaken the Clean Air Act – with the Orwellian label of “Clear Skies.” The fourth – Rep. Tom DeLay – is House Majority Leader, perhaps the single most influential member of Congress and another arch-foe of clean air standards.

The report examines recent voting records and campaign contributions of these four, as well as two other “Toxic Triangle” members who sit on the key congressional panels – Rep. Ralph Hall (D-TX) and Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX).

Since 1995, these “sooty six” lawmakers “have committed 50 serious dirty air actions – either casting votes or introducing anti-clean air legislation,” said Altman. “And in just the past four years they have collectively received more than \$3 million dollars from big polluters.” The report notes that each received far more in polluter cash than the “average” member of Congress.

Rep. Joe Barton, who chairs the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, is the “darling” of electric power companies, the cement industry and other smokestack industries, noted Katy Hubener, executive director of the Blue Skies Alliance of Texas. “In fact, he is so well known for his dirty-air activities that the conservative Dallas Morning News recently christened him ‘Smokey Joe,’ “ said Hubener. Barton has recently signaled that he would not only push the President’s pollution plan, but also seek a special “fix” to “help his polluter friends in the cement industry,” Hubener added. The fix would entail overturning court decisions that could require quicker cleanup in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area and other parts of the country. Barton received \$562,363 in polluter campaign contributions during the last two election cycles (1999-2000 and 2001-2002)

Looming over Barton is Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA), chairman of the Full House Energy and Commerce Committee. Tauzin “has consistently done the bidding of big polluters while turning a deaf ear to the suffering of minority communities poisoned by polluters,” said Anne Rolfes, director of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. Tauzin received \$506,310 in polluter cash in the last two campaign cycles, most of it from the oil and gas and electric power industries.

Another member of the “filthy four” is Rep. Tom DeLay, the House Majority Leader who once introduced a bill to repeal the entire Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. “DeLay – a former exterminator who got into politics because of what he saw as too much government oversight over his spreading of poisons, wields enormous power behind the scenes to weaken environmental protections,” said Denny Larson of the Refinery Reform Campaign. DeLay received \$383,919 in polluter money during the past four years.

Rounding out the “filthy four” is Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Inhofe received \$560,729 in polluter money during the past four years. “Inhofe is eager to do the polluters’ bidding to gut the Clean Air Act,” said researcher John Hartman of Oklahoma’s Environmental Awareness Group. “If he succeeds, coal plants will be let off the hook for pollution they should reduce and the health of Oklahomans will suffer.”

The report also examines the dirty-air voting records of and campaign contributions to two other “Toxic Triangle” lawmakers on the key congressional panels – Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Rep. Ralph Hall (D-TX). Cornyn, who received a staggering \$737,942 in polluter money during his 2002 Senate race has cast only one dirty-air vote so far, but it was a big one – permitting the Bush administration to move ahead with a plan to weaken “new source review,” a Clean Air Act requirement designed to require modern pollution controls on old smokestack industries that want to increase their pollution. “That vote is an ominous sign that Cornyn will do whatever the White House tells him to do when it involves dirty air,” said Karen Hadden, also of the SEED Coalition.

Hall is a low-key but senior member of Barton’s subcommittee and has consistently sided with polluters in recent years. He received \$278,637 in polluter cash during the last four years even though he faced only token opposition.

The report was produced by state and national clean air groups committed to protecting the Clean Air Act. Copies are available by calling 202-785-9625.

Summary of Contributions to the Sooty Six by Industry, 2000 and 2002 election cycles

Recipient	Oil & Gas	Electric Utilities	Chemical & Related Mfg	Mining	Auto Manufacturers	Steel Production	Total
Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas)	\$217,498	\$254,825	\$40,040	\$16,000	\$16,500	\$17,500	\$562,363
Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas)	\$166,650	\$92,550	\$65,469	\$31,000	\$19,000	\$9,250	\$383,919
Rep. Ralph Hall (D-Texas)	\$89,402	\$155,235	\$21,000	\$6,500	\$3,500	\$3,000	\$278,637
Rep. W.J. OBillyO Tausin (R-La.)	\$198,384	\$194,590	\$60,791	\$32,545	\$17,500	\$2,500	\$506,310
Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas)	\$467,072	\$97,860	\$73,360	\$60,850	\$12,000	\$26,800	\$737,942
Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.)	\$273,006	\$167,463	\$36,560	\$60,350	\$13,500	\$9,850	\$560,729
Totals	\$1,412,008	\$962,518	\$297,217	\$207,239	\$81,998	\$68,898	\$3,029,900
House Avg, '00-'02	\$29,661	\$31,494	\$11,417	\$10,561	\$8,306	\$6,164	
Senate Avg, '00-'02	\$62,497	\$57,422	\$22,623	\$32,115	\$15,195	\$9,683	
Senate Avg, '02	\$29,181	\$31,814	\$9,667	\$17,564	\$6,245	\$4,661	

###