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Letters . . .

Continued from page 2

well-considered and valid, though different, approaches to solving the crisis.

Beyond these major differences, the House bill has a number of superior features to the Senate bill, including \$24.6 billion total spending on pollution control as opposed to only \$20 billion in the Senate bill. The House bill provides \$18.35 billion in Federal grants for municipal waste treatment plants, and the Senate bill provides only \$14 billion. The House bill also creates and funds the financing authority for local communities and provides for substantially more longrange research than does the Senate bill.

In addition to these differences, there are many provisions of both bills which are shared. All of this may seem to say that in no regard is the Senate bill better. I do not say this, as I believe both of these bills have substantial merit as approaches to the problem. Also, I must honestly say that the House bill is not the exact bill I would have written, should I have done it alone. I differ with aspects of the bill and battled vigorously in committee to make changes. Like all major legislation, it is no one's bill, but rather represents the thinking of a number of Congressmen.

All of this brings me to a final point, which is an extremely practical one in the realities of legislation. This bill was subject to incredibly strong pressures from all sides as it was early recognized as a landmark effort.

My strong belief is that the bill which emerged from the House Public Works Committee was the best compromise between those who wanted a strong bill and those who wanted no bill at all. Once this bill moved to the floor, the question was whether or not the members of the committee would split to vote on amendments, or remain generally unified. Although no formal unity existed, the Committee, including myself, tended to vote to support the bill as reported by the Committee.

The reason is very simple, and it was shared by a great many members. It was the clear realization that a non-unified Committee would surely result in the weakening of the bill.

In summary, let me just say that a portrayal of this vote as industry versus environment is totally inaccurate. A more accurate appraisal would be that it was a struggle to maintain a good bill, the best water pollution bill ever passed in the House, against a wide range of efforts to open it up for a complete amending process, which would have had disastrous effects on the content of the bill.

At this time, the two versions of the bill must be reconciled in Conference Committee, and it is my hope that the results will include the merits of both versions. My priority remains unchanged. I believe we must achieve clean water as fast as possible, and we must be prepared to pay the costs.

Sincerely,

NICK BEGICH

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