



Photo by Jayne Winters

## Climate Action Needs Bipartisan Spirit of Original Clean Air Act

Maine’s U.S. Senators Edmund Muskie and George Mitchell rallied remarkable levels of bipartisan support and consensus to pass the Clean Air Act of 1970 and Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, respectively. As a result, the air is much cleaner, people’s health has improved, and innovation in clean technology has increased, all while the economy has grown substantially.<sup>1</sup> It’s time for Congress to summon the same spirit of bipartisanship to take immediate and bold action on climate change.

### Maine’s Bipartisan Leadership Delivered Cleaner Air to the Nation

Senator Muskie helped redefine public health and the modern environmental movement through the passage of the Clean Air Act. This legislation passed unanimously in the U.S. Senate (73-0) on September 22, 1970, and nearly unanimously (374-1) in the U.S. House. Senator Mitchell guided the committee process on the Clean Air Act Amendments, which passed the Senate in an 89-10 vote and the House by 401-25.

**“We all must recognize that the quality of our air is most valuable, most essential, to the quality of our environment and to the quality of our lives upon this planet.”**

—Senator Edmund Muskie, 1970

### How the Clean Air Act Has Benefited Mainers

- Prevented an estimated 2,775 premature deaths in 2020<sup>2</sup>
- Delivered \$15-29 billion in economic benefits from increased<sup>3</sup> productivity and lower medical bills
- Improved air quality and reduced ozone by curbing pollution from cars and trucks<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> EPA. “Progress Cleaning the Air and Improving People’s Health.” April 2019. <<https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/progress-cleaning-air-and-improving-peoples-health#pollution>> <sup>5</sup> Ibid. <sup>7</sup> Ibid. <sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> NRDC. “State-Level Results from Industrial Economics (2020), The Benefits and Costs of Air Pollution Regulations, Commissioned by NRDC.” 2020. <<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/air-pollution-regulations-state-level-results.pdf>> <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Union of Concerned Scientists. “The Clean Air Act.” November 18, 2010. <<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/clean-air-act>>

## How the Clean Air Act Has Benefited the Nation

- Air pollution from 1970 to 2017 for six common pollutants dropped 75%, while the U.S. economy over this period, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), grew by 324%<sup>5</sup>
- Over the past 40 years, the national average concentration of carbon monoxide decreased by 85%, ozone by 35%, lead by 98%<sup>6</sup>
- Over the past 40 years, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, contributors to acid rain, decreased by 95% and 92%, respectively
- New cars, SUVs, and pickup trucks are 99% cleaner for common pollutants than they were in 1970<sup>7</sup>
- In 2020, the 1990 Clean Air Amendments prevented 230,000 adult mortality deaths, 280 infant deaths, 2,400,000 cases of worsening asthma, 200,000 cases of heart disease, and 120,000 emergency room visits<sup>8</sup>
- Estimated benefits from the law's success are pegged at \$2 trillion in 2020, exceeding costs by a factor of more than 30:1<sup>9</sup>

**“The threats of climate change don’t end at party lines, and our work to mitigate these effects can’t either.”**

—Senator Angus King, 2019

## Bold, Bipartisan Climate Action Needed Today

According to a March 2020 public opinion survey by Critical Insights, 80% of Maine voters believe it is important for lawmakers to work across party lines to address climate change and clean energy.<sup>10</sup>

In 2019, a sweeping set of landmark climate action laws were passed with bipartisan support in Augusta, setting new emissions reduction targets and expanding investment in clean energy to create new jobs and deliver affordable, reliable electricity to Maine people. The Maine Climate Council was created with the mandate to develop a statewide Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions at least 80% by 2050.

A September 2020 report conducted for the Maine Climate Council concluded that the cost of inaction on climate is very high. Maine’s economic output could decrease 15% by 2050 without sustained action to address climate change.<sup>11</sup> Federal action and support is desperately needed for Maine and other states to be able to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and capture the benefits of a clean energy economy.



<sup>5</sup> EPA. “Air quality-National Summary.” September 2, 2020. <<https://www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-national-summary>>

<sup>6</sup> EPA. “Benefits and Costs of the Clean Air Act 1990-2020, the Second Prospective Study.” 2020. <<https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/benefits-and-costs-clean-air-act-1990-2020-second-prospective-study>>

<sup>10</sup> NRCM. “Poll Shows Strong Majority of Maine Voters Support Climate Action and Clean Energy.” May 12, 2020. <<https://www.nrcm.org/news/strong-majority-maine-voters-support-climate-action-clean-energy/>>

<sup>11</sup> Eastern Research Group, Inc.. “Assessing the Impacts Climate Change May Have on the State’s Economy, Revenues, and Investment Decisions: Volume 2: Cost of Doing Nothing Analysis.” August 7, 2020. <[https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/ERG\\_MCC\\_Vol2\\_CostOfDoingNothing\\_9-1-2020.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/ERG_MCC_Vol2_CostOfDoingNothing_9-1-2020.pdf)>

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