

## Debate opens on clean air legislation

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate opened debate Monday on compromise clean air legislation that would mean the first tightening of air pollution laws in 13 years.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, in an opening statement said "rarely has there been legislation so thoroughly considered, so long debated, so much discussed."

After nearly a decade of deadlock, the way was cleared last week for floor debate when Senate leaders and the Bush administration agreed on curbs on toxic industrial chemicals released into the air, smog-causing pollutants from automobiles and the compounds that cause acid rain.

Even before the revised legislation was brought to the floor Monday, the compromise came under attack from critics who said it was too tough on industry and senators who called it too weak to clean the dirty skies over the nation's cities.

Sen. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, who was the only member of the Environment and Public Works Committee to vote against an earlier version of the legislation last November, said the compromise represented little improve-

ment over the committee bill.

It's the "big long arm of the federal government intruding into the lives of the American people," said Symms. "I'm not sure we need this bill right now."

Mitchell snapped back that Symms "has opposed every effort to improve the quality of America's air in the past 10 years."

Acknowledging that the bill was not as strict as he wanted, Mitchell said its provisions were the best that could be obtained from the administration, and warned his colleagues. "We're going to stay with this bill until we complete it, sooner or later."

At a news conference, Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., said the legislation fails to require the auto emission controls needed to clean the air in seriously polluted areas such as the major metropolitan areas of the Northeast.

"Americans are choking on dirty air, and the clean air bill coming to the Senate floor just won't get the job done," said Lautenberg, promising to seek some changes to the bill in the coming days.

## Inefficiency plagues student financial aid

(CPS) — The federal student aid program is plagued by so much fraud and inefficiency that it no longer works correctly, a Senate panel charged Feb. 20.

"To date we have not found one area that we have examined in the federal staff aid programs that is operating efficiently or effectively," said a staff statement at a hearing by the Senate's permanent subcommittee on investigations.

The subcommittee issued the statement after compiling a report about the state of the programs.

"Despite lofty goals and good intentions of the student aid programs, hundreds of millions of dollars are being wasted of fraudulently obtained."

The result, of course, is that legitimate two-year and four-

year college students get either not enough financial aid dollars, or none at all.

In reply, campus student aid administrators say the Senate study is too general, blaming everybody rather than just the institutions that have high default rates.

"The report is oversimplifying a very complex situation," charged Hal Lewis, financial aid director at Coker College in Hartsville, S.C. "The broad generalization doesn't apply" to all campuses.

Lewis and others say most of the fraud and inefficiency occur at trade schools.

"We know that there are some problems, but defaults are often limited to a small number who purport to be educational institutions," said Dallas Martin, executive director of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. "Many times the education is inferior, and the student is not properly trained to compete for a job."

The Government Accounting Office noted that Washington guaranteed \$12 billion in loans to students in 1989.

Despite the increase in defaulters, NASFAA's Martin believes that, "Overall the vast majority of students and institutions are working hard and doing a good job. It's important to get to the root of the problem, but don't give the impression that the whole system is rotten."

Martin, like others in the aid industry, notes a particular problem with trade schools, which are for-profit programs dedicated to teaching specific trades like truck driving, cosmetic care and clerical skills.

The U.S. Dept. of Education, which administers most federal college programs, estimates that trade schools account for 35 percent of the schools participating in the federal guaranteed student loan program, but for half the total amount of loans that are in default.



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