

Environmental Policies-SAMPLE ANSWERS

Historical Background

Coming off the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, other social and political movements sprang up in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Environmental protection and reform was an issue that garnered great national attention. Launched in part with the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962, a book that detailed the harmful effects of pesticides, it became a significant area of domestic policy during the Nixon presidency. During the Nixon administration, many of the most well known environmental policies were enacted. They included: the signing of the National Environmental Policy Act, the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the signing of the Clean Air Act of 1970, the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the signing of the Endangered Species Act, the signing of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the creation of the Legacy of Parks program, which converted more than 80,000 acres of government property to recreational use in 642 new parks. Policy efforts continued in subsequent presidencies.

Summarize the historical background:

The country realized, beginning in the 1970s, that we needed to actively start regulating environmental issues. This led to a large amount of legislation passed in an effort to reduce pollution, protect endangered species, and clean up water and air. Numerous policies from the 1970s-today have been initiated to try and protect the environment and limit the negative impact we have in order to preserve it for future generations.

Potential Impacts To Individuals And Private Industry

Environmental policies enacted throughout U.S. history always come with a cost. There is a price for these protections. It is up to American citizens and their elected officials to decide how to balance those costs with the greater good. Traditionally, the greatest cost is the amount of funding needed to enact and maintain the policy. That money must come from taxpayer dollars. The Clean Air Act of 1972 most notably sparked this debate. Oftentimes, the policies also place additional costs on private industries. They may pay more in taxes if they work with hazardous materials, their operating costs may increase in order to comply with new regulations, and there are usually fines involved with violating the policies. In order to protect the environment, limitations are placed on individuals and private industry. These policies may dictate how a business operates or place limitations on things like emissions. Policies like the Endangered Species Act of 1973 limit what an individual may be able to hunt or fish or may impact where someone can build a house or open a business.

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| What may be the financial impact of environmental policies on citizens and private industry? | Higher taxes Higher operating costs for business |
| How do environmental policies place limitations on citizens and private industry? | Hunting and fishing regulations Building regulations Emissions restrictions Limits on how you do business, where you dispose of waste, etc. |
| What is the rationale for these impacts and limitations? | Necessary for the public good |

What Did Government Officials Say?

| Quote | Summarize in your own words |
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| <p><i>Because water pollution is a uniquely local blight, primary responsibility for solving the problem lies not with the Federal Government but rather must be assumed and exercised, as it has been, by State and local governments. (Eisenhower: Veto of Bill To Amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act)</i></p> | <p>The responsibility to fund environmental programs should rest with state and local governments, not the national government.</p> |
| <p><i>Although water pollution is a matter of local concern and local responsibility, more importantly, it is a serious National problem requiring a strong National program. (Kennedy: Remarks on signing Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments, 20 July 1961)</i></p> | <p>The entire nation bears the burden of local environmental concerns; we are all impacted even when not in our locality.</p> |
| <p><i>I am also concerned, however, that we attack pollution in a way that does not ignore other very real threats to the quality of life, such as spiraling prices and increasingly onerous taxes. Legislation which would continue our efforts to raise water quality, but which would do so through extreme and needless overspending, does not serve the public interest. There is a much better way to get this job done. (Nixon: Veto of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972)</i></p> | <p>Not helpful to make strides in environmental reform at the cost of people's ability to have decent quality of life. Financial costs have to be considered. Other problems may take precedence.</p> |
| <p><i>Can we afford clean water? Can we afford rivers and lakes and streams and oceans which continue to make life possible on this planet? Can we afford life itself? Those questions were never asked as we destroyed the waters of our Nation, and they deserve no answers as we finally move to restore and renew them (Sen. Edmund Muskie, Maine)</i></p> | <p>The consequences of not funding environmental reform are too high.</p> |
| <p><i>I am pleased to sign the Clean Water Act of 1977, which amends the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972. This act reaffirms our national commitment to protect the quality of our waters and the health of our people. This act also requires Federal agencies to comply with all Federal, State, and local substantive and procedural requirements concerning the control and abatement of water pollution. I strongly support this requirement because it demonstrates the Federal Government's own commitment to cleaning up the water while also recognizing that certain exemptions may be needed in the national interest. (Carter: Clean Water Act of 1977 Statement on Signing H.R. 3199 Into Law)</i></p> | <p>This is about the health of the people Environmental reform should be the commitment of all levels of government Exceptions to environmental regulations should be possible if a new national interest outweighs everything else.</p> |