

Washington worked was that you begin with a proposal and deliver it to Congress where “many people have an opportunity to shape and reshape.” She declared that President Clinton favored an energy tax that “does equity” across both income and regional lines and “makes a meaningful contribution” to both increasing energy efficiency and reducing imported oil. The administration would support, however, a compromise that seemed “to make the most sense to all.” The preferred tax, O’Leary concluded, was “the tax we can get out of committee.” In the end, the House-Senate conference committee settled on the 4.3 cents-per-gallon increase, and in early August the reconciliation bill squeaked through the House by a vote of 218 to 216 and the Senate by 51 to 50.<sup>258</sup>

## ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: GLOBAL WARMING

Environmentalism achieved mainstream status with the incoming Clinton Administration. Environmentalists had cheered Clinton’s electoral victory, and the Clinton Administration, much more than its predecessor, inclined itself toward environmental activism. Environmentalists, for the first time, secured positions of real power within the executive branch. Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., had been perhaps the Senate’s premier environmentalist, and his best-selling book, *Earth in the Balance*, called for major economic restructuring to curb global warming. Nor was the Department of Energy exempt from the upwelling environmentalism in the new administration. Secretary O’Leary directly linked energy policy decisions to the “health and quality” of the environment, and her personnel decisions reflected a heightened environmental consciousness. She brought into the Department a number of environmentalists, including Dan Reicher, a lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, who became her deputy chief of staff and environmental counselor.<sup>259</sup>

Not surprisingly, global warming became a focal point for the Clinton Administration. The Bush Administration had remained skeptical about global warming, sponsoring

significant research but rejecting as too expensive the setting of specific targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The incoming administration made action on global warming a priority. As Gore noted, global warming was “the highest-risk environmental problem the world faces today.” In his first Earth Day address on April 21, President Clinton announced that the United States would stabilize greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. This would not be an easy task. In 1990, carbon-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions were 1,464 million metric tons. Without stabilization efforts, greenhouse gas emissions would increase about 7 percent by the year 2000 to 1,568 million metric tons. Clinton offered no specifics on achieving stabilization, and critics, some within the administration, complained about making such a commitment without knowing what new measures would be needed and what their effect would be on the economy. As Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Chairman J. Bennett Johnston (D-LA) admonished, “You ought to consider sensible policy first before you adopt a goal because a goal may not then be achievable by a sensible policy.” To “fill in the policy,” the White House formed the Interagency Climate Change Mitigation Group composed of the Department of Energy and other key agencies and tasked with developing an emissions action plan. With energy playing a central role in any stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions, the Department emerged as the lead agency.<sup>260</sup>

Secretary O’Leary and the administration emphasized consensus and voluntarism in preparing the action plan. On June 10 and 11, the White House staged the Conference on Global Climate Change attended by representatives from the private sector, the environmental community, academia, and others. O’Leary told the conference that the plan offered “a unique opportunity to come together.” The plan, she added, had to “make sense to all of us.” Although admitting that the administration had no preconceived notions and that “everything is on the table,” the secretary stressed that she was “not so impressed that command and control will get us all the