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# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

14-S-71

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
JOHN A. VOLPE FOR THE BILLBOARD REMOVAL CEREMONY, TUESDAY, APRIL  
27, 1971, FREEPORT, MAINE

Let me say first what a pleasure it is to be back in New England again,  
where no one speaks with an accent.

I am pleased to be here today for the real beginning of our Highway  
Billboard Removal Program. While the Congress passed the initial legislation  
in 1965, it was not until last December that funds were authorized to carry  
out this program of Highway Beautification. It's been a long wait, but it  
will be worth it.

Since becoming Secretary of Transportation over two years ago, I have  
traveled throughout this Nation. This is a country of which we can all be  
proud. This is a country whose grandeur, whose natural beauty, and whose open  
spaces are as much a part of our heritage as the Declaration of Independence  
and the Star Spangled Banner.

We will be celebrating our Bicentennial in 1976. Two hundred years is a  
long time in terms of individual men's lifetimes, but not in terms of a nation's.  
Two hundred years is just about the time it takes to learn to appreciate what  
you have -- and to learn that what you have is due to the foresight of those  
who went before you. As the President said in this environmental message to  
the Congress in February: "Together we hold this good earth in trust. We must --  
and together we can -- prove ourselves worthy of that trust."

It is particularly appropriate that this program begin in April. Spring  
is a time not only of celebration, but also of abstinence in many religions.  
It seems a curious paradox -- abstinence in the face of plenty. But it is?  
Since time immemorial, man has realized that it is only through abstinence --  
through the jealous guarding of our resources -- that we are able to preserve  
and protect, for ourselves and for future generations, what the good Lord has  
given us.

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There are those who say that the Billboard Removal Program is destructive. It isn't. It represents the realization that the majestic vistas along our rural highways belong to the people. And it returns those vistas to the people legally -- through the due process of laws. This is the way to accomplish our goals. This program does not affect informational signs or billboards in already commercial areas; it only affects the billboards in our rural areas which conflict with nature.

This program also represents a triumph for constitutional fair play and our free enterprise system. We realize that while the beauty of our landscape is more important than billboards, the billboard itself is not intrinsically evil. Therefore, this legislation provides just compensation for those whose signs are taken to benefit the commonwealth. And I am delighted with the full co-operation we are receiving from the billboard industry.

Environmental quality may cost more, but it's also worth more.

As I have often said, at the Department of Transportation environmental quality is a goal not a constraint. We are pleased to be able to take part in this constructive program to improve the quality of life in our Nation. But I think this beautification program means more than that. I think it represents a model of what I like to call the President's program of environmental federalism. As I am sure you realize, this administration believes in returning power to the states and to the people. We believe in letting those closest to the problems set the goals and the priorities. We are here today because Maine wanted to move ahead with highway beautification, because Maine wanted to be first. We applaud your foresight, and on behalf of all Americans, thank you. We sincerely hope that "as Maine goes, so goes the Nation."

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## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY 4:00 P.M.  
April 27, 1971

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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe today flew to Maine to launch a nationwide program to eliminate some 800,000 non-conforming billboards from along Federally-funded interstate and primary road systems.

Participating with Secretary Volpe in special ceremonies along Interstate 95 near Freeport, were Maine Governor Kenneth M. Curtis, Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner and Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Environment and Urban Systems Herbert F. DeSimone.

Maine is the first state to begin removing billboards under the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. Seven other states -- California, Delaware, Idaho, Maryland, New York, Utah and Vermont -- have received funding approval for a removal program. The Federal government pays 75 percent of the cost of removing the billboards.

Under this program, states are required by law to sign agreements with the Secretary of Transportation establishing standards for size, lighting and spacing of billboards, and under which states are to maintain effective control of signs.

States that do not sign such agreements face a 10 percent reduction in federal highway funds, Secretary Volpe pointed out. Fifteen states have qualified for cooperative funding by passing a law in compliance with federal billboard legislation, he added.

"This six-year program will cost about \$300 million not only for takedown costs but also just compensation to be paid to billboard owners," Secretary Volpe explained. "The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 has been strengthened by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 to enable us to move ahead with a progressive program to end scenic pollution brought about by the proliferation of non-conforming billboards."

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Under the law, billboards are banned within 660 feet of interstate or federal-aid primary highways outside urban areas. Areas zoned commercial or industrial are exempted.

"We have introduced a program of allowing sign companies to remove their non-conforming billboards under one contract rather than one billboard at a time," Secretary Volpe pointed out. "The cooperation we have received from sign companies under this concept has been most gratifying."

Testifying before a House Public Works Subcommittee last year, Secretary Volpe stated, "The erection of new uncontrolled billboards has been stopped in the 32 states which have passed outdoor advertising control legislation." The possibility of losing 10 percent of federal highway funds for not taking positive action against non-conforming billboards should encourage states to control erection of new non-conforming signs, he explained.

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