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Subject: whitman statement on Ombudsman

Some of you have replied that you could not open the file. Here's teh text of the statement:
 Environmental News

FOR RELEASE: FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2002

WHITMAN PLEASED WITH JUDGE'S DISMISSAL
 RELOCATION PROCEEDS, ALLOWING FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE OF OMBUDSMAN

Contact: Steffanie Bell, 202-564-6976

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman today released the following statement in response to the decision by United States District Judge Richard W. Roberts to dismiss the case captioned Robert J. Martin, et al. v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, et al., D.D.C. Civ. Act. No. 02-0055 (RWR).

"I am pleased with today's decision because it allows us to proceed with our efforts to make the ombudsman function more independent," said Whitman. "The General Accounting Office (GAO) report recommended that the Agency 'take steps to strengthen the independence' of the ombudsman. By relocating the position to the Office of the Inspector General we are doing just that."

Mr. Martin and the Government Accountability Project had challenged Administrator Whitman=s November 27, 2001 decision to transfer the ombudsman function from EPA=s Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response to EPA=s Office of Inspector General (OIG). Whitman=s decision responded to a GAO report which recommended greater independence for the ombudsman function. Because of OIG=s strong statutory and organizational independence, relocating the ombudsman function to OIG provides the additional independence recommended by the GAO report.

The transfer of the ombudsman to the OIG, effective Saturday, April 13, 2002, is now underway following the judge's ruling.

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