A highlight of Ralph Nader’s hour long talk at the GCSAA Convention was on environmental contamination as a form of violence. “Pollution is silent violence,” Nader said. “It is a silent encroachment that does not generate the concern and action as other forms of violence that we can see or feel with our senses. We react quickly to things we can sense,” Nader said, “because they register in our minds. However, over the last 100 years there has been extensive industrialization. Man has outsmarted himself. He cannot sense or react to this silent violence that is just as serious as a fire or any other crime or disaster. We accept pollution and defer our reactions towards solving the problems. We must stop selling our country short,” Nader said. “We have the technological know-how. Pressure must be brought to bear on using this know-how towards solving our problems. We predicted we would put a man on the moon 10 years before we accomplished the feat. We’ve been giving the auto industry deadlines for 20 years and they keep deferring them. Halting pollution is a two pronged attack,” Nader said. “You must first stop polluting, and then move to clean up what is already polluted. What good does it do to clean up Lake Erie if the same practices that got it polluted in the first place are still in effect? The public must view an assault on the environment as an assault on human beings; they cannot be separated. The young people growing up are children of a polluted environment. We must not pass along the problems we have created to their generation. If we do, they could become psychologically adapted to a poor environment and also take no action. While we may become psychologically adapted, we are not physiologically adapted to a poor environment.”

The most significant renovation in the present system must be in adopting national standards Nader believes. Otherwise companies will play states against states. “State pollution laws are ineffective because companies keep states from enforcing these laws,” Nader said. “They use a form of environmental blackmail. They threaten to pull out of the state causing unemployment and a loss of revenue, to a state with less stringent pollution laws.”