



## Diverse Health and Environmental Coalition Calls for Sweeping Changes in U.S. Chemical Safety Law

*Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families Coalition Releases Comprehensive Reform Platform*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Richard Denison, [rdenison@edf.org](mailto:rdenison@edf.org), 202/387-3500, x3348  
Margie Kelly, [margie@saferstates.org](mailto:margie@saferstates.org), 541/344-2282

(Washington, DC – August 4, 2009) A broad coalition of health and environmental organizations unveiled today a set of key requirements for reforming the nation's antiquated chemical safety law, the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The coalition, called *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families*, includes state and national environmental groups, associations of health professionals, advocates for health-affected individuals and environmental justice organizations.

"Our organizations representing more than four million Americans have come together to demand fundamental changes in the system our country uses to ensure that the tens of thousands of chemicals produced and used every day are safe," said Andy Igrejas, director of the *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families* coalition.

"The 33-year-old Toxic Substances Control Act is badly broken," said Dr. Richard Denison, senior scientist with Environmental Defense Fund. "By failing to identify, let alone address, the long and growing list of chemicals in everyday products that we now know can harm people and the environment, TSCA has forced states, businesses, workers and consumers to try to act on their own to address what should be a national priority."

The U.S. Congress is beginning to consider changes to TSCA, with amending legislation expected to be introduced this fall.

"Emerging science increasingly links exposure to toxic chemicals to the rising incidence of serious and chronic health problems among Americans," said Rebecca Clouse, RN, Environmental Health Liaison for the American Nurses Association. "Adoption of our platform for reform would transform TSCA into a law that prevents toxic chemical exposures before they occur."

Key elements of the *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families* platform include:

- Immediately initiate action on chemicals we already know are extremely dangerous.

Persistent, bioaccumulative toxicants (PBTs) to which people could be exposed should be phased out of commerce. Exposure to other toxic chemicals, like formaldehyde, that have already been extensively studied, should be reduced to the maximum extent feasible.

- **Require basic information to identify additional chemicals of concern.**

Chemical manufacturers should be held responsible for the safety of their products, and should be required to provide full information on the health and environmental hazards associated with their chemicals. The public, workers, and businesses should have full access to this information.

- **Protect all people and vulnerable groups, using the best science.**

Chemicals should meet a standard of safety for all people, including children, pregnant women, and workers. The extra burden of toxic chemical exposure on people of color, low-income and indigenous communities must be reduced. The development and use of information gleaned from biomonitoring should be expanded.

The *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families* platform is attached and is also available at:

[www.SaferChemicals.org](http://www.SaferChemicals.org)

**Alaska Community Action on Toxics • American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities • American Nurses Association • Association of Reproductive Health Professionals • Autism Society of America • Breast Cancer Fund • Center for Environmental Health • Center for International Environmental Law • Clean New York • Clean Water Action • Earthjustice • Ecology Center • Environmental Defense Fund • Environmental Health Fund • Environmental Health Strategy Center • Health Care Without Harm • Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy • Just Transition Alliance • Learning Disabilities Association • Moms Rising • Natural Resources Defense Council • Reproductive Health Technologies Project • Safer States • US Public Interest Research Group • Washington Toxics Coalition • WE ACT for Environmental Justice**



## **A Platform for Reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act**

A reformed Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) would serve as the backbone of a sound and comprehensive chemicals policy that protects public health and the environment, while restoring the luster of safety to U.S. goods in the world market. Any effective reform of TSCA should:

- **Immediately Initiate Action on the Worst Chemicals:** Persistent, bioaccumulative toxicants (PBTs) are uniquely hazardous. Any such chemical to which people could be exposed should be phased out of commerce. Exposure to other toxic chemicals, such as formaldehyde, that have already been extensively studied, should be reduced to the maximum extent feasible.
- **Require Basic Information for All Chemicals:** Manufacturers should be required to provide basic information on the health hazards associated with their chemicals, how they are used, and the ways that the public or workers could be exposed.
- **Protect the Most Vulnerable:** Chemicals should be assessed against a health standard that explicitly requires protection of the most vulnerable subpopulations. That population is likely to usually be children, but it could also be workers, pregnant women, or another vulnerable population.
- **Use the Best Science and Methods:** The National Academy of Sciences' recommendations for reforming risk assessment at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should be adopted. Regulators should expand development and use of information gleaned from "biomonitoring," the science of detecting human chemical contamination, to inform and impel efforts to reduce these exposures.
- **Hold Industry Responsible for Demonstrating Chemical Safety:** Unlike pharmaceuticals, chemicals are currently presumed safe until proven harmful. The burden of proving harm falls entirely on EPA. Instead, chemical manufacturers should be responsible for demonstrating the safety of their products.
- **Ensure Environmental Justice:** Effective reform should contribute substantially to reducing the disproportionate burden of toxic chemical exposure placed on people of color, low-income people and indigenous communities.
- **Enhance Government Coordination:** The EPA should work effectively with other agencies, such as FDA, that have jurisdiction over some chemical exposures. The ability of the states to enact tougher chemical policies should be maintained and state/federal cooperation on chemical safety encouraged.
- **Promote Safer Alternatives:** There should be national support for basic and applied research into green chemistry and engineering, and policy should favor chemicals and products that are shown to be benign over those with potential health hazards.
- **Ensure the Right to Know:** The public, workers, and the marketplace should have full access to information about the health and environmental hazards of chemicals and the way in which government safety decisions are made.