



States call for bipartisan action on federal toxics law

OLYMPIA – A group of state environmental leaders from California, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Vermont, Washington, and the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) today praised Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-New Jersey and Sen. James M. Inhofe, R-Oklahoma, for conducting a hearing to help advance legislation that updates the 35-year-old Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).

TSCA is the primary federal environmental law that regulates the safety of the tens of thousands of chemicals used every day in the United States. Over the past several months leaders from industry, government and environmental groups have been working with the Senate to forge a major federal overhaul.

“I believe there has never been such broad agreement that TSCA needs to be fixed,” said Ted Sturdevant, Director of the Washington State Department of Ecology. “States urge Congress to establish a strong federal system that ensures the safety of chemicals in commerce.”

In the absence of an effective federal chemical safety law, states have stepped in to protect people and the environment. During the past eight years, 18 states have passed bipartisan supported legislation ranging from comprehensive chemical safety laws to bans on specific high-risk chemicals. For example, California recently joined 10 other states in banning Bisphenol A (BPA) from baby bottles and sippy cups.

“Federal leadership of chemical regulation policy is essential,” said Debbie Raphael, Director of California's Department of Toxic Substances Control, part of the California Environmental Protection Agency. “While California is paving the way in terms of seeking alternatives for toxic chemicals in consumer products, we need a strong effort on a national scale, and we applaud this bipartisan effort.”

But most states do not have the capacity or expertise to set up individual chemical management programs to deal with the unintended consequences of problem chemicals in commerce. Of particular concern are the cleanup costs resulting from persistent bioaccumulative toxics, known as PBTs.

“Michigan strongly supports this legislative reform because states do not have the resources to develop 50 individual state chemical management plans across the country,” said Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant. “In Michigan, we are working to be leaders in green chemistry – creating new products and economic opportunities that make a difference in people’s lives.”

“The Environmental Council of the States supports TSCA reform and has articulated the points that the states believe need to be addressed in three resolutions adopted by the state environmental agencies' leaders,” said Tom Burack, ECOS President and Commissioner of

the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. "We are pleased to see bi-partisan interest in making improvements to this law, and look forward to working with Congress and others to achieve them."

State legislatures have been active during the 2011 state legislative season. For example, New York is the first state to ban the use of "Chlorinated Tris" or tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate in children's goods starting in 2013, and Connecticut is the nation's first state to ban BPA from thermal paper in cash register receipts. State legislatures meeting in 2012 are expected to continue addressing toxic chemical concerns.

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For more information: Ecology's Chemical Policy website:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/policy.htm>

Ecology's website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Ecology's social media: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html>