



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

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## **CIEL applauds proposed overhaul of U.S. law on chemicals**

U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey) today introduced the "[Safe Chemicals Act](#)" to transform how chemicals are regulated in the United States. Congressmen Bobby Rush (D-Illinois) and Henry Waxman (D-California) also introduced a similar draft bill in the House of Representatives. This historic legislation would amend the dysfunctional 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which has allowed chemicals to remain on the market for decades without basic safety information or adequate protection for children, workers, consumers, and communities.

The Safe Chemicals Act reflects key principles articulated by CIEL and more than 200 other public health and environmental groups working together in the [Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families](#) coalition. The bill would:

- Require chemical manufacturers to provide information on hazards, exposures, and uses for thousands of industrial chemicals, and give States and the public access to the data;
- Place responsibility on chemical manufacturers to demonstrate that their products meet a health-based safety standard, or face restrictions on some or all uses;
- Provide a powerful incentive for developing innovative products featuring safer alternatives, including new training, education and research on Green Chemistry.

The two bills reflect different approaches to implementing the [Stockholm POPs Convention](#) and two other important international chemical treaties. Ratification of these treaties has for years been a shared goal of state governments, health and environmental groups, workers, Native Americans, and the chemical industry.

CIEL Senior Attorney Glenn Wiser, an international treaties expert, said, "Senator Lautenberg's bill supports clean and effective U.S. implementation of the Stockholm Convention. The House should follow suit to allow the United States to ratify this important treaty quickly."

In recent years, the United States has fallen behind many global allies and trading partners who are taking action to protect their people and environment from toxic chemicals. Throughout the world, many now view the United States as a follower, rather than leader, on chemical safety.

CIEL Senior Policy Advisor Daryl Ditz, who testified on [TSCA reform](#) in 2009 before Chairman Rush's Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, says: "Introduction of the Safe Chemicals Act is a critical first step to reestablishing U.S. leadership on chemicals in a fast changing world." Congress can safeguard the health of all Americans and ensure that U.S. companies succeed in a world of rising public expectations for sound chemicals management.

CIEL, along with scores of public interest advocates, many state officials, responsible companies, and tens of thousands of Americans, supports swift action on persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic

chemicals (PBTs) and other chemicals whose threats are well-established. However, both bills fall short in giving EPA authority to restrict production or use of chemicals without a full-blown safety assessment. The Senate bill contains a one-sentence place holder directing EPA to "act quickly to manage risks from chemicals that clearly pose the highest risks." The House draft contains two additional features. Manufacturers of 31 listed chemicals including several notorious PBTs, along with asbestos, lead, mercury and vinyl chloride must provide data within six months, and EPA must make a safety determination on each within one year of enactment.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee is holding a series of stakeholder dialogues with business, government, and public interest participants. This should provide opportunities to identify key issues and make constructive improvements through the legislative process.

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