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CONTACT: Shayna Samuels, 718-541-4785
or shayna@ripplestrategies.com
Margie Kelly, 541-222-9699
or margie@saferstates.org
Elizabeth Crowe, 859-986-0868
or elizabeth@cwwg.org

Landmark Chemical Legislation Introduced to Protect the Health of American Families *Kentucky Groups Join in Support of the Bill, But Seek Improvements Before Enactment*

A broad coalition of more than 200 public health and environmental organizations have announced their support for the "Safe Chemicals Act of 2010", introduced last week by Senator Lautenberg and Congressmen Waxman and Rush. The long-awaited, landmark legislation would overhaul the way the federal government protects the public from toxic chemicals.

"The Safe Chemicals Act goes a long way toward bringing chemical policy into the 21st century," said Andy Igrejas, Director of *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families*. "We look forward to working with Congress to strengthen the bill to keep dangerous chemicals out of the marketplace."

"Reform of our laws regulating toxic chemicals is long overdue," said Elizabeth Crowe, Executive Director of the Berea-based Kentucky Environmental Foundation, a member of *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families*. "Only a few hundred of 80,000 chemicals on the market today have ever been tested for safety. Our families should not be treated like guinea pigs for untested toxic chemicals. We need policies that protect our health."

Representatives Waxman and Rush have announced an aggressive schedule in the House of Representatives to complete committee action by mid-summer.

While there are differences between the House and Senate versions of the legislation, the Safe Chemicals Act includes a number of essential reforms that would substantially improve public health protections:

- Requiring chemical companies to develop and make publicly available basic health and safety information for all chemicals.
- Requiring chemicals to meet a safety standard that protects vulnerable sub-populations, including pregnant women and children.
- A new program to identify communities that are "hot spots" for toxic chemicals and to take action to reduce exposures.
- Expediting safety determinations and actions to restrict some of the most notorious chemicals, like formaldehyde, vinyl chloride, and flame retardants.

While supporting the legislation, the *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families* coalition is calling for improvements in three critical areas. As currently drafted, the legislation would:

- Allow hundreds of new chemicals to enter the market and be used in products for many years without first requiring them to be shown to be safe.
- Not provide clear authority for EPA to immediately restrict production and use of the most dangerous chemicals, even persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT) chemicals, which already have been extensively studied and are restricted by governments around the world.
- Would not require EPA to adopt the National Academy of Sciences' recommendations to incorporate the best and latest science when determining the safety of chemicals, although the Senate bill does call on EPA to consider those recommendations.

The Safe Chemicals Act would amend the federal Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA). The current TSCA law is widely acknowledged to be ineffective. TSCA 'grandfathered in' 62,000 chemicals at the time it passed without requiring any testing or demonstration of safety. A growing body of science has documented widespread human exposures to toxic chemicals in everyday products, and has linked those exposures to the rising incidence of a number of serious chronic diseases and disorders, including reduced fertility, learning disabilities, breast and prostate cancer, and certain childhood cancers.

Environmental justice groups applaud in particular the provisions mandating EPA to develop action plans to reduce the disproportionately high exposures to toxic chemicals in some communities.

"Thousands of people all across the country, like here in Louisville, are not only impacted by chemical exposures through household products but also because we live next door to chemical facilities themselves," said Eboni Cochran of Rubbertown Emergency Action (REACT) in Louisville. "This bill, for the first time, would give EPA authority to identify these communities and protect them from major sources of toxic chemicals."

Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families promises a robust campaign to educate the public and members of Congress about both the positive aspects and the shortcomings of the Safe Chemicals Act.

"It's high time we closed the gap between what scientists say is safe, and what our government allows on supermarket shelves," said Maureen Swanson from the Learning Disabilities Association of America. "This bill represents a major advance toward giving American families the peace of mind they've been seeking."

Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families is a broad coalition of groups, including major environmental organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund, health organizations like the Learning Disabilities Association, Breast Cancer Fund, and the Autism Society, health professionals and providers like the American Nurses Association, Planned Parenthood

Federation of America, and the Mt. Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center, and concerned parents groups like the 1 million-member MomsRising. For more information and analysis of the Safe Chemicals Act, visit our website at www.saferchemicals.org.

The Kentucky Environmental Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Berea, Kentucky working for solutions that protect our health and the environment, <http://www.kyenvironmentalfoundation.org>.