



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, November 30, 2010

CONTACT: Shayna Samuels, 718-541-4785
shayna@ripplestrategies.com;
Margie Kelly, 541-222-9699
margie@saferstates.org;
Greg Capillo, KEF, 859 986 0868
greg@kyenvironmentalfoundation.org

States Lead in Action on Toxic Chemical Reform; Congress Should Step Up to Protect Health, Report Says

Local KY group, parents want legislators to support chemical reforms

A first-ever analysis of votes on state laws aimed at protecting the public from toxic chemicals found that 18 states have passed 71 chemical safety laws in the last eight years by an overwhelming margin with broad bipartisan support. According to the report released today, of more than 9,000 votes cast by state legislators, 73% of Republicans and 99% of Democrats favored stronger protection of children's health and the environment from dangerous chemicals, with equal support from governors of each party. The report found that the pace of state policymaking on chemicals has more than tripled in eight years.

Kentucky Congressmen from both sides of the aisle received letters from environmental and health groups urging them to support federal chemical reform. Representatives Ed Whitfield, John Yarmuth, and Ben Chandler received letters asking them to co-sponsor HB 5280, the Toxic Chemical Safety Act of 2010. This bill would standardize some of the reforms already advanced by the states.

"Kentuckians are exposed to toxic chemicals every day, in many ways, and our health is suffering," said Greg Capillo, Toxics and Health Coordinator at the Kentucky Environmental Foundation. "Public health protection is not a partisan issue, and this report shows that voters from both major political parties want legislators to support strong chemical reforms."

Two national health-based coalitions, [SAFER States](#) and [Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families](#), of which the Berea-based Kentucky Environmental Foundation is a member, last week released the new report – *Healthy States: Protecting Families from Toxic Chemicals While Congress Lags Behind*. (To see report, go to <http://kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/>.)

The report release marks the failure of the 111th Congress to pass pending legislation to overhaul the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA) in the face of relentless, well-funded opposition from the chemical industry.

Kentuckians from all over the state see the benefits of chemical policy reforms. Ashley Cochrane a mother and childhood cancer survivor from Berea said, “As a parent, it makes sense to me that chemicals be tested for safety before they are released into the environment or stocked on store shelves.”

“For people living near the fence line of chemical facilities, TSCA reform is of the utmost importance,” said Eboni Cochran, Co-Coordinator of Rubbertown Emergency Action (REACT) in Louisville. “Not only are we over burdened with toxic air emissions but in many instances the only stores in our communities sell cheap products that are more than likely made with chemicals that harm our health.”

Andy Igrejas, Campaign Director of the Safer Chemicals Healthy Families coalition said “The next Congress should recognize the urgent need and bipartisan support for chemical policy reform. If the chemical industry wants a more predictable regulatory environment and restored consumer confidence, they should come to the table in support of meaningful, commonsense federal reform.”

A growing body of new scientific research links toxic chemical exposures in early life to some of the most serious public health threats of our time, such as increased risks of breast and prostate cancer, infertility, and learning and developmental disabilities. A recent poll conducted by The Mellman Group found that 78% of Americans are seriously concerned about the threat to children’s health from toxic chemicals in day-to-day life. Heeding the aggressive opposition of chemical industry lobbyists rather than the support of the American electorate, Congress failed to pass TSCA reform legislation three times in last six years.

The 111th Congress will soon come to a close without taking action on the currently pending TSCA reform legislation – H.R. 5820, the Toxic Chemicals Safety Act introduced by Reps. Bobby Rush (D-IL) and Henry Waxman (D-CA), and S. 3209, the Safe Chemicals Act of 2010, sponsored by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ).

KEF’s Capillo said that despite the inaction by current Congress should not stop Kentucky legislators from co-sponsoring the reform bill now. “To do so would show they recognize that protection of public health is a core value of Kentucky residents.”

Capillo noted that Kentucky Representative Ed Whitfield, who is in line as Chair of the Congressional subcommittee dealing with TSCA reform, recently stated his interest in moving chemical policy reforms ahead.

#

Additional details about TSCA reform can be found at <http://kyenvironmentalfoundation.org/> .

Highlights of Findings from the Healthy States Report:

- **Increasingly, the states have passed new laws to phase out chemicals that threaten children’s health and restrict toxic chemicals in consumer products.** In the last eight years, both the number of state chemical laws and the number of states passing toxic chemical reforms have tripled.
- **State lawmakers passed tough laws on toxic chemicals with an overwhelming margin of support.** More than 8,000 (or 89%) of the more than 9,000 roll-call votes cast by state legislators favored tighter toxic chemical regulation, a margin of support greater than 8-1.

• **Tough state laws on toxic chemicals also received broad bipartisan support.** Of the votes cast, about 99% of Democrats and 73% of Republicans favored stronger protections of children’s health and the environment from dangerous chemicals, with equal support from governors of each party.

• **State laws targeting specific chemicals and products that threaten children’s health received the greatest attention and support.** Sixty-six laws banned bisphenol A (BPA) in baby and toddler products (with 98% support), phased out toxic flame retardants (PBDEs) in home products (93%), reduced children’s exposure from common products containing lead (88%) and cadmium (86%), and promoted green cleaning (88%).

• **State legislators strongly supported recent state laws that create new programs for broad regulation of toxic chemicals.** Five comprehensive chemical policy reform laws passed in four states in the last three years—with the support of 84% of all votes cast, including a majority of Republicans (57%)—and were signed by governors from both parties in California, Maine, Minnesota, and Washington State.

• **The policy actions taken by the states advance many of the same chemical policy reforms proposed in Congress.** Both the new state chemical laws and proposed federal legislation (H.R. 5820 and S. 3209) require manufacturers to provide information on chemicals, mandate quick action on the most dangerous chemicals, and promote safer alternatives and greener chemistry.

Quotes from the Report on State Chemical Policy Reform:

“Voting against this bill is like voting against brakes on a school bus,” said Bob Sump, Washington State Representative (R), House floor speech on final passage of the Children’s Safe Products Act, February 18, 2008

“As a cancer survivor, I know first-hand the physical, emotional and financial toll these deadly diseases can take on families across the state . . . I support the Kid-Safe Products Act because it will help prevent these devastating diseases — and that’s good for our families and our pocketbooks.”

Meredith Strang Burgess, Maine State Representative (R), from a civic engagement mailer by the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine, 2010

“I’m pleased the Connecticut Legislature has worked in a bipartisan way to pass laws that provide necessary and timely solutions to the problems of toxic chemicals in our daily environment.”

John McKinney, Republican Minority Leader, Connecticut State Senate, October 2010