

[HJ 12]: Protecting Children's & Public Health from Toxic Chemicals

A Resolution Supporting Reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act

What is the Toxic Substances Control Act?

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) is the federal law that is responsible for overseeing the more than 80,000 chemicals used in commerce. This includes chemicals placed in consumer products like children's toys, cleaning products, and furniture.

Why Does it Need Updating?

This law has not been updated in 34 years. Right now dangerous chemicals such as asbestos and formaldehyde – which we know are carcinogenic – are widely used in consumer products. Updating this law will ensure dangerous chemicals aren't used in these products anymore. In addition, updating this law will boost American business by providing incentives for green chemistry research so that safer alternatives can be found.

What health problems are related to toxic chemical exposure?

More than 30 years of environmental health studies have led to a growing consensus that chemicals are playing a role in the incidence and prevalence of many diseases and disorders in our country, including:

- Leukemia, brain cancer, and other childhood cancers, which have increased by more than 20% since 1975.¹
- Breast cancer, which went up by 40% between 1973 and 1998.² While breast cancer rates have declined since 2003, a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is now one in eight, up from one in ten in 1973.³
- Asthma, which approximately doubled in prevalence between 1980 and 1995 and has stayed at the elevated rate.^{4,5}
- Difficulty in conceiving and maintaining a pregnancy affected 40% more women in 2002 than in 1982. The incidence of reported difficulty has almost doubled in younger women, ages 18–25.^{6,7,8}
- The birth defect resulting in undescended testes, which has increased 200% between 1970 and 1993.⁹
- Autism, the diagnosis of which has increased more than 10 times in the last 15 years.¹⁰

¹ Tracey J. Woodruff, et al., *America's Children and the Environment*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2008)

² Holly L. Howe, et al., "Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer (1973 through 1998), Featuring Cancers with Recent Increasing Trends," *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 93, no. 11 (June 2001): 824–42

³ Janet Gray, ed, *State of the Evidence: The Connection Between Breast Cancer and the Environment*, (San Francisco: Breast Cancer Fund, 2008)

⁴ <http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/-cite-ref-0-4> Tracey J. Woodruff, et al., "Trends in Environmentally Related Childhood Illnesses," *Pediatrics*, 113, no. 4 (April 2004): 1133–1140

⁵ <http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/-cite-ref-0-5> Jeanne E. Moorman, et al., "National Surveillance for Asthma, United States 1980–2004," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5608a1.htm> (November 1, 2009)

⁶ <http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/-cite-ref-0-6> Anjani Chandra and Elizabeth Hervey Stephen, "Impaired Fecundity in the United States: 1982–1995," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 30, no 1, (1998): 34–42

⁷ Anjani Chandra, et al., "Fertility, Family Planning and Reproductive Health of US Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth," *Vital and Health Statistics*, 23, no. 25 (2005)

⁸ Kate Brett, "Fecundity in 2002 National Survey of Family Growth Women 15–24 Years of Age", Hyattsville, MD, National Center for Health Statistics (2008)

⁹ Leonard J. Paulozzi, "International Trends in Rates of Hypospadias and Cryptorchidism," *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 107, no. 4, (1999): 297–302

Why is TSCA Reform Important to Montana?

Libby, Montana



The asbestos disaster in Libby highlights one of the core failings of TSCA. In 1990, the EPA tried to protect public health by issuing a ruling under TSCA that would have prohibited the manufacture, processing, distribution, and use of asbestos – a known cancer-causing agent—in most products. But under TSCA, the EPA needed to *prove* that asbestos presented an unreasonable health risk AND that the benefits of regulation would outweigh the costs to industry – an impossible task. The asbestos contamination in Libby could have been addressed and remediated much sooner if TSCA had been a stronger law, preventing the loss of precious lives in that community. It's time to update TSCA to ensure that another disaster like what happened in Libby, MT never happens again.

The Cost to the Montana Economy



Environmentally-related diseases cost \$404.6 million each year in Montana. This includes statewide healthcare costs, as well as the costs of the loss of productivity to our economy from diseases and conditions such as child lead poisoning, childhood asthma, neurodevelopmental disorders, birth defects and cancer.¹¹

What Does this Resolution Do?

This resolution urges Congress to support policy reforms that:

- Ensure all existing and new chemicals are not harmful to human health, including the most vulnerable population like children and pregnant women
- Increase transparency across the supply chain so manufacturers, suppliers, and consumers have safety and health information on the chemicals they are using
- Require immediate action to reduce or eliminate the worst chemicals, including chemicals that build up in the body and pose the most risk to humans like mercury and lead
- Allow states and tribal governments to operate chemicals management programs that are more protective than the federal government's
- Boost American business and jobs by making it easier for safer chemicals to enter the market and investing in green chemistry research to find safer alternatives to harmful chemicals
- Help reduce disproportionate exposure to toxic chemicals in 'hot spot' communities

For more information, contact Jamie Silberberger at Women's Voices for the Earth at (406) 543-3747 or jamies@womensvoices.org

¹⁰ <http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/-cite-ref-0-10>National Institute of Mental Health, "NIMH's Response to New Autism Prevalence Estimate," <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/updates/2009/nimhs-response-tonew-autism-prevalence-estimate.shtml> (November 4, 2009)

¹¹ Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) (2005). *Our Montana Environment: Primer on Health and Environmental Determinants*. Montana Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, 2005.