



New Jersey
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Safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment
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WEC Applauds Introduction of Safe Chemicals Act
Statement from Rick Engler
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Yesterday, Senator Lautenberg introduced the Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 moving one step closer to protecting workers and the public from toxic chemicals. The Act aims to comprehensively reform the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, a critically flawed law that had high hopes, but little substance or authority.

“We applaud Senator Lautenberg’s continued leadership in protecting workers, the public and our right to know about toxic chemicals. The Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 moves to fix a long broken system that put the health and safety of workers and the public in danger at the hands of corporate profits while moving towards a greener, more sustainable future. Once again, Senator Lautenberg has stood up for ordinary citizens, our most vulnerable populations, such as children and overburdened, low-income communities, and American workers for generations to come.

When the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) went into effect, over 62,000 chemicals were being used and little was known about how those chemicals could affect our health. Since then, we have learned how the chemicals we use and are exposed to every day can lead to cancers, developmental disabilities and change in reproductive health. There are now over 80,000 chemicals being used in chemical manufacturing and every day products, and despite all that we have learned about the dangerous affects of many chemicals, few have been banned.

As health and safety advocates, we have known for decades that the chemicals policy in the US is broken. When EPA attempted to ban asbestos under TSCA in the late 80’s, a court ruled that the agency had failed to meet the burden of proof showing that chemical caused undue harm despite numerous studies linking asbestos exposure to lung cancer, mesothelioma and the death of workers.

The Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 looks to correct the past while moving towards a sustainable, healthy future. The Act will:

- Requires companies to develop and disclose basic health and safety

- information for each chemical they produce;
- Require EPA to prioritize and evaluate chemicals based on risk to the most vulnerable and take action on the most dangerous;
 - Places the burden of proof on chemical manufacturers to prove the safety of their chemicals, and not on EPA as it is under TSCA;
 - Establishes a public database to catalog the information submitted by chemical manufacturers and the EPA's safety determinations, and full disclosure of health and safety information to workers;
 - Identify 'hot spot' communities that are disproportionately impacted by toxic chemicals and create action plans to reduce that unjust burden on health; and,
 - Promotes innovation and development of green chemistry, including a program for public education and worker training.

The New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC) is an alliance of labor, community, and environmental organizations working together for safe, secure jobs, and a healthy, sustainable environment. WEC links workers, communities, and environmentalists through training, technical assistance, grassroots organizing, and public policy campaigns to promote dialogue, collaboration, and joint action.

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