

The Center for the Celebration of Creation• Earth Ministry• Ecumenical Ministry of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns• The Episcopal Church• Evangelical Lutheran Church in America• Friends Committee on National Legislation• GreenFaith• Interreligious Eco-Justice Network• Maine Council of Churches• Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns• Massachusetts Council of Churches• Minnesota Council of Churches• Missionary Oblates, Justice, Peace/Integrity of Creation Office• National Council of Churches• Pennsylvania Council of Churches• Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office• United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries• The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society• The United Methodist Women• Unitarian Universalist Association• Unitarian Universalist Ministry for the Earth• Texas Impact• Voices for Earth Justice

Honorable Bobby L. Rush, Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection
Committee on Energy and Commerce, U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

CC: Chairman Henry Waxman
Chairman Frank Lautenberg
Senator James Inhofe
Chairwoman Barbara Boxer
Administrator Lisa Jackson

March 2, 2010

Dear Chairman Rush, Ranking member Radanovich, and Members of the Subcommittee,

As various faith traditions, we are united across theological lines on the need to protect Creation, care for our bodies, and care for vulnerable populations. We believe that all humankind is created in God's image and receives nourishment from the bounty of God's Creation (Genesis 1:26-27). Caring for our own bodies is an essential aspect of our call to care for and honor God's Creation (I Corinthians 6:19; Genesis 2:15). Unfortunately, current chemical policies are failing to protect us. Scientists are finding strong links between serious health concerns and the chemicals we are exposed to in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and the products we use.

We applaud you for hosting a hearing concerning Persistent, Bioaccumulative, and Toxic chemicals (PBTs), a particularly dangerous class of chemicals. These chemicals can last for long periods of time, travel long distances, accumulate in organisms, become more potent as they move up the food chain, and they are highly toxic. **Swiftly phasing out PBTs should be a key component of comprehensive chemical policy reform.**

These chemicals threaten the integrity of God's good Creation, the health of communities in the United States, and our sisters and brothers across the globe. They can even be passed on to future generations through the developing fetus and through the breast milk of nursing mothers. Native communities and other members of Creation in the Arctic are especially vulnerable because PBTs naturally migrate and accumulate at the poles. Low-income communities and communities of color living near incinerators and other sites where PBTs are present are also highly vulnerable. These chemicals are linked to health conditions including cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, early onset puberty, and infertility.

Over the last ten years, many denominations and faith traditions have passed policies to raise awareness in their congregations and have taken bold action to curtail use of specific PBTs such as dioxin, mercury, and lead. We are also concerned about newer classes of PBTs such as polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) widely used as flame retardants, and perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) such as those used in paper packaging, stain resistant materials, or non-stick

cookware. Our communities are responding in faith by making changes in the products used in homes and congregations, and by advocating on a state level for laws that ensure God's Creation and vulnerable populations are protected from the most dangerous toxic chemicals.

However, individual actions and state laws are only one part of the solution. We need a more comprehensive approach. It is time for the federal government to act and repair chemical legislation that is failing to protect the U.S. population and communities across the globe. The evidence is mounting that toxic chemicals are threatening the health of God's Creation and all of God's children. The United States Government has a moral responsibility to protect Creation, and the citizens in this country and around the world.

As you work to modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act, we urge you to consider immediate action to address the most dangerous of chemicals to which people are being exposed. PBTs should be phased out, with exceptions only for critical uses where we lack a viable, safe alternative.

We hope that we can work with you to reform national chemical laws to ensure the health of Creation, protect vulnerable populations, and enable future generations of God's children to live healthy lives.

Sincerely,

The Center for the Celebration of Creation (Pennsylvania)
Earth Ministry (Washington State)
Ecumenical Ministry of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GreenFaith (New Jersey)
Interreligious Eco-Justice Network (Connecticut)
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