



# CHILDREN'S HEALTH, CHEMICAL POLICY REFORM, AND A STRONG ECONOMY

## *A Guide for Those Seeking Public Office*

An overwhelming majority of voters in our country are concerned that hazardous chemicals in everyday consumer products are linked to chronic illnesses that are on the rise in children and adults, including learning disabilities, infertility, and many cancers.

Voters—especially women—want to know why toxic chemicals like lead, mercury and bisphenol A (BPA) are still found in children's products despite hundreds of scientific studies linking these chemicals to cancer, asthma, birth defects and other chronic diseases.

They are alarmed by the presence of toxic chemicals in people, especially in infants and children.

Voters expect their elected leaders to take action to stop known and preventable health threats and to limit the associated rising healthcare costs. They expect elected officials to take action to ensure that the products for sale do not contain toxic or untested chemicals.

Companies from Wal-Mart to Staples are adopting policies to keep dangerous chemicals out of their products and off their store shelves. Cities and states throughout the country are investing in the next economic boom—"green chemistry" solutions that protect health and generate safe, new jobs while preserving U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Voters across the political spectrum want candidates who champion solutions that protect public health while harnessing American ingenuity to grow the economy.

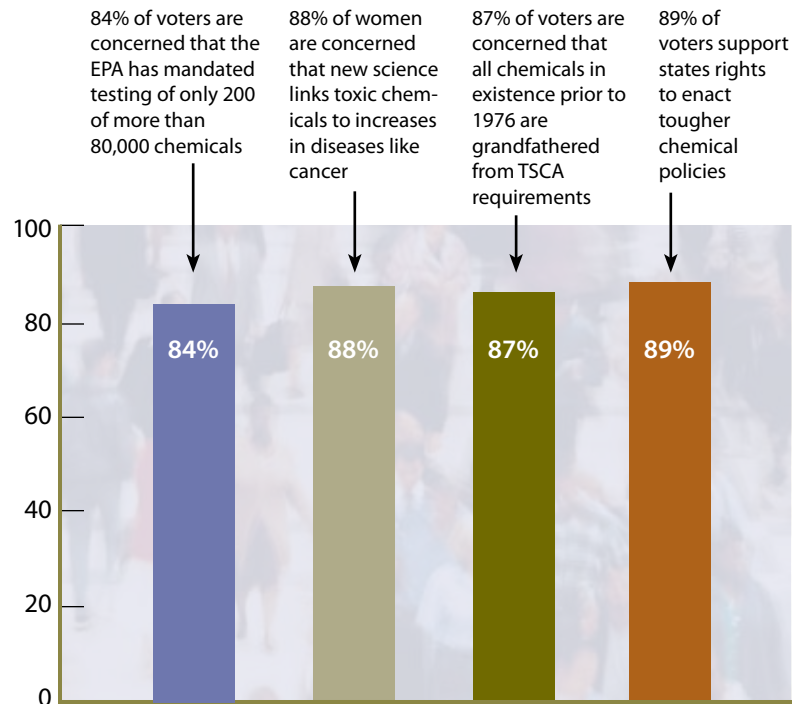
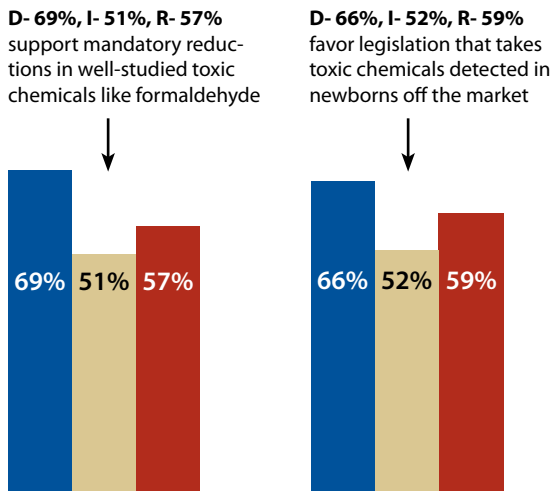
*88% of women and 81% of men are concerned that new science links toxic chemical exposure to increases in a variety of diseases like cancer, and support updates to the 1970s era federal law that would protect us from health-harming chemicals.*

## Americans Are Very Concerned about Exposure to Toxic Chemicals

The majority of voters across demographic groups—Democrats, Republicans and Independents—do not believe that current regulation of chemicals is strong enough.<sup>1</sup> In particular, women believe that we are already seeing the long-term impact of chemicals that act like hormones in people including the rise in female reproductive problems, and a near tripling of a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer in the past four decades.

*This is such a compelling issue for voters that a majority are more likely to support candidates who favor chemical regulation reform and less likely to support candidates who oppose reform.*

Poll findings reference Lake Snell Perry & Associates. "Public Attitudes Around TSCA Reform: Finding from Survey Research," October 2009.



## Toxic Chemicals and Public Health

Growing scientific evidence demonstrates that some chemicals widely used in consumer products contribute to an epidemic of chronic diseases and disorders.<sup>2</sup>

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 133 million people in the US are living with these and other chronic diseases. Chronic diseases now account for 70% of deaths and 75% of U.S. health care costs.<sup>3</sup>

- As much as 90% of childhood cancer may be explained by environmental exposures,<sup>4</sup> based on a review of 31 studies of childhood cancer.

- At least 12% of women reported difficulty in conceiving and maintaining pregnancy in 2002, an increase of 40% from 1982.<sup>5</sup>
- Male reproductive health has declined since the 1990s. Scientific reports cite evidence of decreased sperm count and quality, birth defects of the genitals,<sup>6</sup> and a 60% increase in testicular cancer between 1973 and 2003.<sup>7</sup>
- Learning and developmental disabilities are estimated to affect approximately one in six children in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>



# It's Time for Our Laws to Catch up to Modern Science



**By updating and improving our state and federal laws governing toxic chemicals, we can reduce exposure to toxic chemicals, improve health and lower health care costs. A healthier and more prosperous future is within reach with leadership that embraces these fundamental ideals.**



## **1. Toxic Chemicals Don't Belong in Consumer Products or People**

Toxic chemicals are now being detected in places where they were never intended to be. Formaldehyde fumes from building materials are accumulating inside our homes,<sup>9</sup> "Teflon" chemicals common in rain gear and non-stick cookware are found in household dust,<sup>10</sup> and BPA is leaching from baby bottles and food can linings into food and beverages.<sup>11</sup>

The research from hundreds of studies has concluded that every American is contaminated by several hundred synthetic chemicals in their bodies—chemicals found in everyday products. One ground-breaking study showed that infants at birth, among the most vulnerable to health damage, have over 200 toxic chemicals in their bodies.<sup>12</sup>

Taking immediate action to phase out persistent, bio-accumulative toxicants and reducing our exposure to widely studied hazardous chemicals to the greatest extent feasible will help protect everyone's health.

## **2. Comprehensive Reform Is Good for Business**

Leading companies are highly motivated to identify and use safer alternatives to toxic chemicals. Today's business leaders are concerned about the health and business impacts that could arise if the products they use or sell contain toxic chemicals. They recognize that safer chemicals protect human and environmental health and cut the costs of regulation, hazardous waste storage and disposal, worker protection, and future liabilities. Such steps also offer new opportunities for small, medium and large business, by making U.S. businesses more competitive in a global marketplace and creating new jobs.



## **3. Safer Products Create Economic Opportunity**

Consumer desire for safer products, independent business action to minimize risks, and state action to protect their citizens have led to a change in chemical policies in a growing number of corporations. Herman Miller, SC Johnson, Seventh Generation, and Hewlett-Packard are among the companies that have been motivated to modernize chemical policies and practices. Our government can jumpstart economic opportunity and innovation through tax incentives, assistance programs and partnerships with education institutions to develop safer chemicals and products. Government can also use its purchasing power to procure safer products that support American job creation. Smart government investment in innovative technology and requirements for safer products can protect health, expand the economy, and create local jobs.



*The time has come to bring TSCA [Toxic Substances Control Act] into the 21st Century.... We've only been able to effectively regulate a handful of chemicals and we know very little about the rest.*

LISA P. JACKSON,  
EPA ADMINISTRATOR<sup>13</sup>

## Government Leadership

It's widely recognized that the federal system for regulating chemicals is broken. As momentum for change builds, states and municipalities across the country have become the laboratories for innovative laws based on the common sense principle that hazardous or untested chemicals don't belong in consumer products when safer alternatives are available.<sup>14</sup>

- Governors and legislators in **California, Maine, Minnesota and Washington** enacted laws to reform chemicals policy, establishing priority chemicals of high concern, requiring manufacturers to disclose the toxic chemicals they add to products and in some cases authorizing the state to require safer alternatives where feasible.

- Several **New York counties**, the **City of Chicago**, **Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, Wisconsin**, and **Washington** have passed policies that ban bisphenol A (BPA) from baby bottles and sippy cups, and in some cases from infant formula, baby food cans and jars, and sports bottles. Public health officials in **Connecticut** and **Massachusetts** have issued advisories warning pregnant women, infants, and chemotherapy patients to reduce exposure to BPA.


- **Oregon** and **Vermont** joined **Maine** and **Washington** in phasing out the use of a highly toxic flame retardant chemical.
- Several states—including **New York, Michigan, California, and Maine**—are investing in “green chemistry” research and economic development as the emerging job creation engine of the 21st century.
- Thirteen states, including **California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont**, and **Washington**, have issued joint recommendations calling for the reform of the Toxics Substances Control Act.

## Tap Into Public Support for Safer Chemicals

Voters across the spectrum respond to positive messages about protecting our health and promoting a clean, vibrant economy. We encourage you to publicly communicate your support for these common-sense principles:

- Toxic and untested chemicals do not belong in everyday consumer products. Highly persistent and well-studied toxic chemicals should be phased out of commerce for non-essential purposes.
- Consumers and downstream businesses have a right to know the exact chemicals in the products they buy for their families and place on their store shelves.
- Chemical manufacturers should be held responsible for the safety of their products and should be required to provide full information on health hazards associated with their chemicals.
- Green chemistry research should be expanded and safer chemicals favored over those with known or suspected health hazards.
- All people—especially pregnant women, children, and workers—should be better protected from toxic chemical exposure.
- The ability of the states to enact stringent chemical policies must be maintained and state/federal cooperation on chemical safety encouraged.



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## ENDNOTES

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