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Environmentalists Urge State Candidates to Pledge to Reduce Toxic Impact in NY

The Alliance for a Toxic Free Future (ATFF) called today for candidates for state office in New York State to pledge to take action to reduce the threat to the public health and environment from exposure to unsafe chemicals.

“ATFF represents New York State’s growing movement for environmental health and justice. We trust that those who claim to represent New Yorkers will gladly sign the pledge to protect our families, workers and environment. Recent developments in science and technology promise to move the chemical industry to a new green future. We need leadership from government and business to realize this promise,” said Prof. Steve Breyman, co-chair of the Board of Citizens’ Environmental Coalition.

ATFF’s 70 plus member organizations represent a broad range of environmental health, justice, labor, faith-based, academic, and health-effected groups. The groups are seeking to eliminate the use and emission of toxic chemicals by using safer substitutes, and redesigning production processes, products and systems. The Alliance was formed in the fall of 2004 with the goal of reforming New York’s chemicals policy so that the threat of toxic chemical exposure becomes a thing of the past.

The groups are asking candidates for State legislature, Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller to endorse the 12-point pledge which outlines the Alliance’s policy priorities for state action in 2007. The points include: the creation of a Toxic Use Reduction Institute, adoption of a green procurement policy for New York State, adopt a strategy to phase out of hazardous toxic chemicals, development of an environmental justice policy to reduce the negative impact on low income and community of color neighborhoods, and creation of several Children’s Environmental Health clinics around the state.

Prof. Breyman spoke on the need for the state to fund both a Toxic Use Reduction Institute and Green Chemistry Institute to help reduce overall toxic waste production

“A Toxic Use Reduction Institute, similar to the one that exists in Massachusetts, would serve as a resource for industry to identify safer alternatives to toxic products as well as how to incorporate them into their production models. The TURI also supplies a wealth of information and research on dangerous chemicals and safer alternatives to them,” added Breyman.

A 1996 Massachusetts study of its TURI found that 67% of companies that implemented the TUR program reported savings on material use and waste disposal. Also, 85% of companies that received training from the institute found it useful to their firm.

"New York State should use its purchasing power to promote environmentally-friendly products, services and technologies," added Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). "We hope that every candidate will pledge their support for a safe and sustainable procurement policy that includes public health and environmental considerations in state purchasing decisions. This will encourage more business innovation and ultimately help ensure a higher quality of life for present and future generations."

Rob Attardo of CEC outlined the need for increased state funding for Children Environmental Health Centers. “Chronic diseases of environmental origin are an increasing problem for our children. To stem the tide of the chronic disease epidemic in our children, New York should establish a statewide, regionalized children’s environmental health system of four to six centers of excellence. The startup cost for the centers is less

than .01% of the environmentally attributable costs.”

Chronic diseases among children include asthma, lead poisoning, obesity, cancer, birth defects, injury, mental disability, autism and ADHD, behavioral, learning and psychiatric disorders. Environmental links have already been established for many of these chronic diseases, and research is continuing to provide new evidence every day. At least 28% of developmental disabilities in children are due at least in part to environmental causes. The Centers would help health care providers reduce children’s exposures to environmental hazards through education of parents, identification of hazardous exposures, diagnosis and treatment of children, and advocating for prevention.

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[Press Conference Intro](#)

[Press Conference Q&A \(Questions are a little hard to hear, but the answers are clear\)](#)