



CEC News Updates

Fall- Winter 2009

We have been very encouraged by Lisa Jackson, the new EPA Administrator, and the actions she has taken in her role.

We were particularly buoyed by her speech to the American Public Health Association on the connection between Environmental Protection and Public Health and the importance of Chemical Policy Reform, a key area of CEC's work. We have consolidated her remarks so you can get some idea of the direction of the EPA under her leadership.

EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson:

A major part of our work in the last year has focused on changing the broader conversation on environmentalism....It means changing the conversation to show how things like climate change and water pollution are real in people's lives... When we talk about environmentalism, it typically brings to mind sweeping vistas and wide-open landscapes. Most people think of saving the whales, protecting the spotted owls, or preserving old-growth forests... Those things are important. But they only make up part of the story.

When the environmental movement really got its start in the 1960s, it started in our nation's cities. It started with people concerned about pollution in the air they were breathing, and the water they were drinking, and the chemicals on the foods they were eating. In short, environmentalism started because of concerns about public health.

Environmental protection is about human protection. It's about family protection and community protection. It's about safeguarding people in the places where they live, work, play and learn.... What have we taught our young people to value, aspire to or take pride in when they see that their communities are unclean, unhealthy and unsafe... Environmental protection is public health protection.... And environmental health issues hold back economic growth.... When environmental degradation keeps businesses from investing, economic possibilities are limited...

We have established as a top priority: Reforming chemical management in America. Six principles guide these efforts:

1. We need to review all chemicals against safety standards
2. Safety standards can't be applied without adequate information and responsibility to supply that information must rest with industry to demonstrate safety
3. EPA and industry must include special consideration for those with higher vulnerabilities, particularly children.
4. When chemicals fall short of the safety standard, EPA must also have clear authority to take action in a timely manner with firm deadlines to maintain accountability.
5. We must encourage innovation in green chemistry and support research, education and other strategies to safer and more sustainable chemicals. This must all happen while respecting the public's right to know.
6. Finally, we must make sure that EPA has adequate resources to accomplish this reform.

Environmentalism can be an "ounce of prevention" that can make a huge difference in our nation's public health efforts. We must draw a clearer line between these two critical issues.

CEC Calls for Cleanup of the West Valley Nuclear Complex

In December of 2008 we released the Independent Full Cost Accounting Study, funded by the NY legislature that documented the problems of trying to contain radioactive materials at this site with its severe erosion problems. That study found that over the long term it would be cheaper to do a Full and complete cleanup now than to risk spreading contamination or a catastrophe that would endanger the public health and the Great Lakes. We carried the message that a full cleanup would be Cheaper and Safer to the public and their elected representatives. We obtained unanimous support for a FULL CLEANUP and multiple Sign On letters from Congressmembers, State Legislators and from Organizations and interested individuals were submitted during the comment period.

The West Valley Action Network held two rallies over the summer in May and September to draw attention to the need for a full cleanup. In September a Cleanup Crew was in Downtown Buffalo with Mops, Brooms and Buckets conveying the message that we are tired of waiting for a full cleanup. We continue to press for a full cleanup and to assemble the facts for use with key decision-makers.

New Positions for New York Stars

Judith Enck, New York's Deputy Secretary of the Environment, will be assuming a new position at the Federal US Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Region II, which covers NY, NJ, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Fortunately, NY is not really losing Judith and she will be in a more powerful position to safeguard our environmental interests. Congratulations to Judith!

Lisa Garcia, NYS DEC's Chief Advocate for Environmental Justice and Equity, will become EPA's Senior Advisor for Environmental Justice

Judith & Lisa will be joining an earlier appointment of a New Yorker. **Mathy Stanislaus** became the Director of OSWER, EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response

These appointments will surely improve and protect New Yorkers and our environment.



No New Nukes!

New York's new Energy Plan called for investments in energy efficiency and renewables, but it also called for another nuclear power plant in Oswego. Nuclear power is completely unsustainable: it is not economic because it requires substantial government subsidies and yet still cost billions of dollars; uranium is in short supply; accident risks are very serious and harm irretrievable; and finally we have not solved the problem of what to do with nuclear waste. Nuclear fuel rods are building up at all the existing plants in the state and numerous nuclear waste site have not been cleaned up. Nuclear power is clearly an environmental nightmare. This fall we invited key NY agency and legislative representatives to a special forum on France's Nuclear Program, with a French nuclear expert presenting. A French company is involved with the Oswego proposal. This information will be useful in helping to fight this new nuke.

New health problems are associated with the Indian Point nuclear reactor. According to the article in the International Journal of Health Services, new data shows an epidemic of thyroid cancer in counties closest to the Indian Point nuclear power plant. The 2001-2005 thyroid cancer rate for the four counties surrounding Indian Point -- Orange, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester -- was 66% above the U.S. average, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reported on 1010 WINS Radio.

CEC's Efforts on Chemical Policy Reform

We have been providing support to two priority state accomplishments:

- The New Pollution Prevention Institute

There is a brand new Director of the Institute, Anahita Williamson, who brings a background in green engineering. A major obstacle to achieving the goals of this Institute is that funding appropriated by the legislature is not flowing adequately to this important program that is already reducing pollution, saving businesses money, and keeping them in New York State. Barbara serves on the Advisory Board and is supporting efforts to advance Green Chemistry and green chemistry education in the state.

- State Agency Green and Sustainable Purchasing Policies Executive Order #4 is the mechanism whereby purchasing policies are reducing waste, increasing energy efficiency and reducing toxics use across the state. Highlights include the ban on pesticide use in the state park system.

President Obama also recently signed a similar Executive order that will impact the entire nation. While an Assembly bill passed that would have established these green and sustainable policies as law, dysfunction in the State Senate over leadership prevented that bill and other legislation from moving forward. However, Senator Thompson has been supportive of the bill.

New accomplishments this Year on Chemical Policy Reform included:

- Funding for an Independent Chemicals Clearinghouse.

This project involves the collaboration of 10 states to establish a means to gather and share information on toxic chemicals, their hazards and safer alternatives. Once full established it will be a key piece of infrastructure for chemical policy reform nationwide. There is ongoing work on the governance for this independent entity, the chemicals database and assessing safer alternatives.

CEC collaborates with other state and national groups:

Working with other groups nationally on these issues there has been Major Progress in increasing the visibility of toxics in consumer products and the need for reform of chemicals policies in Congress and with the new Administration. This can be seen in the remarks of Lisa Jackson, EPA Administrator, in this news update.

A new Bill passed in the House of Representatives was a major victory on Chemical security. If passed in the Senate, it will reduce the risks of a toxic catastrophe, like the horrible Bhopal disaster in India, that continues to impact the health of thousands of people.

Key Health Policy groups are joining Environmental Activists in calling for Increased attention to our exposure to Toxic Chemicals. Below we have included news from just within the past month.

The AMA, American Medical Association, adopted a resolution calling for new policies to reduce public exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals. The resolution was introduced by the Endocrine Society and it is now AMA policy.

<http://www.endo-society.org/media/press/2008/AMAAdoptsSocietyResolution.cfm>

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals are substances in the environment that interfere with hormone biosynthesis, metabolism or action resulting in adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological and immune effects in both humans and wildlife.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) -- a national group that has worked largely on early detection of cancer, cancer research and patient support as well as efforts to halt smoking is now calling for new attention to Cancer Prevention in relation to toxic chemicals. The ACS in a new position paper is advocating for increased resources to improve monitoring and testing of chemicals in the environment, a move that could bolster efforts by environmentalists to clamp down on harmful chemical exposures as a way to reduce health care costs.

<http://caonline.amcancersoc.org/cgi/content/abstract/caac.20041v1>

The Washington Toxics Coalition just released a Groundbreaking Study: Finds Babies are Exposed to Chemicals in Everyday Consumer Products Before They Are Born
www.watoxics.org

Update on CEC's Zero Waste Project

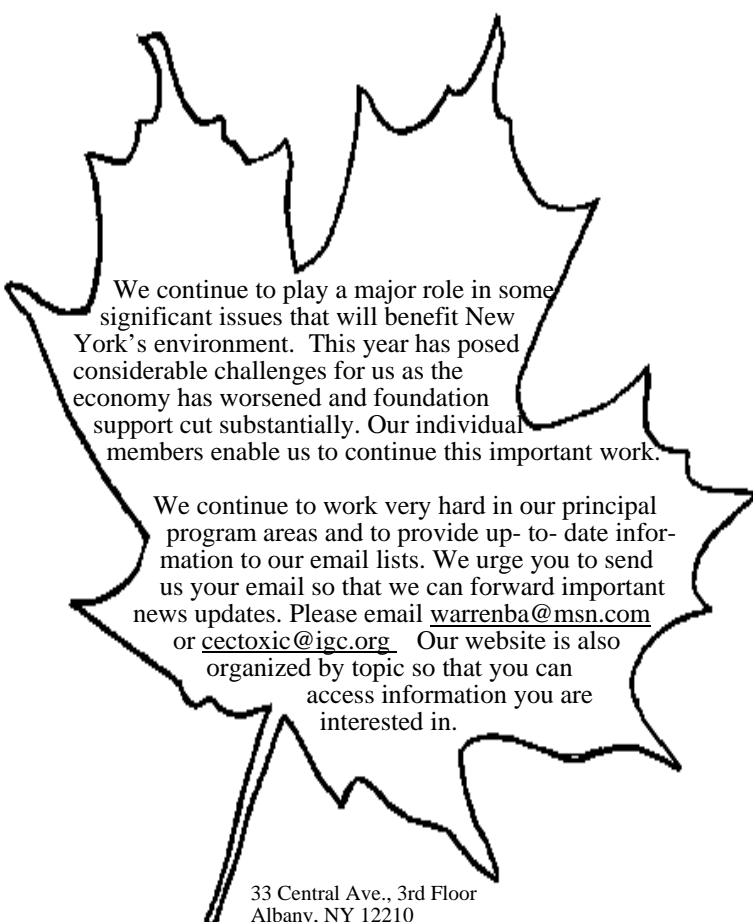
We have been advocating ZERO Waste Goals and Programs for NYS, which includes providing no support for business as usual or the burning and burying of waste. We are promoting ambitious goals to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost the materials currently in our waste stream. Only 17% of the state's municipal waste stream is currently recycled. So New York has a long way to go. We have been working actively on a new State Solid Waste Plan with the State DEC. Unfortunately the DEC is still promoting Disposal solutions, particularly Incinerators and we all must work to defeat any renaissance in such unsustainable and environmentally unsound solutions for waste. We cannot achieve the real benefits possible with the 3 Rs, jobs, a clean environment and cost savings, if we are investing the majority of our money in expensive and polluting incinerators. But private vendors are actively promoting traditional incinerators, and newer versions that are completely unproven as renewable energy sources.

We will be getting out additional information on the Solid Waste Plan, but the general direction is to move "Beyond Waste". We would have preferred Clearer Direction toward Zero Waste.

We are also working with Local Communities around their problems with Landfills and incinerators and generating support for Zero Waste Programs like Product Stewardship or Extended Producer Responsibility.

In a recent development the NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES has adopted a Resolution supporting Producer Responsibility or Product Stewardship. <http://www.productpolicy.org/content/local-epr-resolutions>

Product Stewardship also known as Extended Producer Responsibility, or EPR -- is a policy approach whereby product manufacturers are primarily responsible for the life cycle impacts of their products. The goal of producer responsibility policies is to transfer waste management costs from taxpayers and ratepayers to producers and consumers and thereby stimulate innovation in more sustainable products and packaging. Manufacturers and others along the product chain who take steps to reduce the environmental impact of their products, such as creating and financing take-back programs, reducing packaging, and designing products to be less toxic and easier to recycle, will also assist local governments in their efforts to reduce waste management costs by reducing the amount of trash to be managed.



33 Central Ave., 3rd Floor
Albany, NY 12210
(518) 462-5527
E-mail: cectoxic@igc.org
Website: www.cectoxic.org