

PSR[®] Physicians for Social Responsibility



United States Affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

December 16, 2011

Dear Senator,

As leaders in Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) across the nation, we write to oppose a little-known but highly dangerous rider in the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2011, H.R. 3630.

The rider would effectively exempt hundreds of industrial boilers and incinerators used to generate heat and power at chemical plants, refineries and other major industrial facilities from any obligation to control their toxic pollution. Emissions of fine particulate matter alone from these facilities are known to kill between 3,100 and 8,100 people each year. Each year, pollution from boilers and incinerators also causes more than 5,000 non-fatal heart attacks; more than 50,000 debilitating asthma attacks; and almost 400,000 missed days of work.

To make matters worse, the rider would allow and encourage the combustion of waste chemicals, spent solvents, scrap plastics and tires to be burned in facilities that do not have to control or monitor their toxic pollution at all. The resulting emissions of mercury, arsenic, chromium, lead, dioxins and other toxic pollutants would expose children in communities across the country to pollutants that cause birth defects, developmental damage, and cancer. The rider would ensure that this damage would be permanent.

The rider's proponents have inaccurately claimed that it merely delays controls on boilers and incinerators for 15 months. In reality, it ensures that these polluters won't have to control their pollution until 2018 at the earliest – a delay of almost four years that would inflict between 12,400 and 32,400 unnecessary deaths.

There is no reason whatsoever that legislation to provide tax relief should be coupled with legislation that would deprive Americans of badly needed health protection. We have seen patients suffer and die from asthma, cancer, and other diseases known to result from exposure to pollution. We have the power to greatly reduce those devastating health outcomes. Not to do so is unnecessary and unacceptable.

As health professionals and leaders in our communities, we oppose the deadly pollution rider in H.R. 3630 and strongly, respectfully urge you to reject it.

Sincerely,

Chandran Achutan, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health
Omaha, Nebraska

Julie Becker, PhD, MPH
Founder, Women's Health & Environmental Network
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Lisa Belanger, FNP, PMHNP
Clinical Director, University of Southern Maine Health and Counseling Services
Gorham, Maine

William J. Blackley, MD
Fellow, American Academy of Family Practice
Tallahassee, Florida

Carla Campbell, MD, MS
Attending Pediatrician, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Terrence P. Clark, MD
Clinical Associate Professor, James H. Quillen College of Medicine, East Tennessee State
University
Asheville, North Carolina

Martin Donohoe, MD, FACP
Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Community Health, Portland State University;
Senior Physician, Internal Medicine, Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center
Portland, Oregon

Doug Dransfield, MD
PSR Maine Chapter Board Secretary
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

Steven G. Gilbert, PhD, DABT
INND (Institute of Neurotoxicology & Neurological Disorders)
Seattle, Washington

Richard Grady, MD
Children's Hospital & Regional Medical Center
Seattle, Washington

Andrew Jameton, PhD
Professor, University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health
Omaha, Nebraska

James E. Jones, MD
President, Harrisburg PSR
New Cumberland, Pennsylvania

Margaret Kitchell, MD
Washington State PSR
Seattle, Washington

Christine Llewellyn, MD
Williamsburg, Virginia

Sarah Lovinger, MD
Executive Director, Chicago PSR
Evanston, Illinois

Carmen McDermott, MD
Primary Care Doctor
Sammamish, Washington

Don Mellman, MD, MPH, MBA, FACHE
President, Health Care Policy and Management
Tampa, Florida

Daniel Oppenheim, MD
PSR Maine Chapter Board President
Falmouth, Maine

Lewis E. Patrie, MD, MPH
Western North Carolina PSR
Asheville, North Carolina

James Plumb, MD, MPH
Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Director, Center for Urban Health,
Thomas Jefferson University and Hospital
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Jennifer Pompilio, MD, MPH
Oregon PSR
Portland, Oregon

Lynn Ringenberg, MD, FAAP
University of South Florida Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics
Tampa, Florida

Kenneth D. Rosenman, MD
Professor of Medicine, Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

Pouné Saberi, MD, MPH
Occupational and Environmental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ron Saff, MD
Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine, Florida State University College of Medicine
Tallahassee, Florida

Sydney Sewall, MD
PSR Maine Chapter Board Treasurer
Hallowell, Maine

Dean Sienko, MD, MS
Health Officer (Retired), Ingham County Health Department
Lansing, Michigan

Louis B. St. Petery, MD
Pediatric Cardiologist
Tallahassee, Florida

Maye Thompson, RN, PhD
Oregon PSR
Portland, Oregon

Walter Tsou, MD, MPH
President, Philadelphia PSR
Visiting Faculty, University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Peter Wilk, MD
Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)
Washington, DC