

American Nurses Association
8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3492
Tel (301) 628-5000
Fax (301) 628-5001
www.NursingWorld.org

NEWS RELEASE



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CONTACT: Mary McNamara, 301-628-5198
mary.mcnamara@ana.org
Adam Sachs, 301-628-5038
adam.sachs@ana.org
www.nursingworld.org

ANA URGES SUPPORT FOR SAFE CHEMICALS ACT OF 2011

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA), the largest nursing organization in the United States, is appealing to lawmakers to support the “Safe Chemicals Act of 2011.” This legislation, introduced today by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), would update the 35 year old Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA), which is widely perceived to have failed to protect public health and the environment.

Since TSCA took effect, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been able to require testing on just 200 of the more than 80,000 new chemicals produced and used in the U.S., and just five chemicals have been regulated under this law. This means that chemicals are allowed to enter our homes, workplaces, and communities with little or no testing for human toxicity. Consumers and workers are not informed about harmful chemicals in products/equipment they use at home and on the job, and there is no requirement that safer chemicals be substituted for toxic ingredients. Furthermore, it can take years, sometimes even decades, to remove a chemical from the market once it has been identified.

“Nurses are committed to promoting the health, welfare, and safety of their patients and ANA believes the quality of the environment is inexorably linked to the quality of human health,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN. “That is why ANA fully supports the Safe Chemicals Act of 2011, and will continue its work with our coalition partners and lawmakers to reduce toxic chemical exposure and other environmental threats to public health.”

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Studies continue to demonstrate the links between toxic chemicals in our everyday products and serious illnesses such as cancer, reproductive disorders, developmental disorders and asthma. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 133 million people in the U.S. –almost half of all Americans—are now living with these and other chronic diseases and conditions, which now account for 70% of deaths and 75% of US health care costs. Because of the many chemicals nurses and other health care workers are exposed to in the workplace, they are at even higher risk.

The Safe Chemicals Act reflects a real understanding of how these toxic chemicals impact our health and environment. The bill would overhaul TSCA by:

- Requiring the EPA to identify and restrict the "worst of the worst" chemicals, those that persist and build up in the food chain;
- Requiring basic health and safety information for all chemicals as a condition for entering or remaining on the market;
- Reducing the burden of toxic chemical exposures on people of color and low-income and indigenous communities;
- Upgrading scientific methods for testing and evaluating chemicals to reflect best practices called for by the National Academy of Sciences; and
- Generally providing EPA with the tools and resources it needs to identify and address chemicals posing health and environmental concerns.

ANA is a partner in the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition which supports the goals of the bill. ANA's House of Delegates voiced its commitment to chemical policy reform in 2006 when it overwhelmingly passed a resolution entitled "[Nursing Practice, Chemical Exposure and Right-to-Know](#)." In this landmark resolution, ANA's members called on it to:

- Promote action(s) at the state and national level that will reduce and streamline the elimination of toxic chemicals and require use of safer alternatives when possible.
- Support disclosure about adverse health effects.
- Demand adequate information on the health effects of chemicals before they enter our workplaces and homes.

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ANA was just recently awarded the Champions for Change Award by the organization Practice Greenhealth at the 2011 Environmental Excellence Awards. The award recognizes ANA's commitment to sustainable eco-friendly practices within the association as well as ANA's environmental health work and initiatives on behalf of the nursing profession. To learn more about ANA's work on environmental health, please visit [ANA's Center for Occupational and Environmental Health](#) and ANA's [Safe Chemicals Action Page](#).

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The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.