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Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Dingell, Stupak Probe EPA Conflict of Interest Rules

Washington, D.C. – Leaders of the Committee on Energy and Commerce today requested documents from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the agency's scientific review process and how the agency applies its conflict of interest rules.

Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Bart Stupak (D-MI), the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, said in a letter that the chair of an EPA external peer review panel, Dr. Deborah Rice, had been dismissed from her position after the American Chemistry Council complained Rice was not impartial because she had previously expressed concerns about the health effects of the chemical under review. Meanwhile, the letter notes, at least nine EPA panels assessing the human health effects of toxic chemicals have included individuals alleged to have financial interests in the chemical industry.

The lawmakers are asking for records relating to Rice's dismissal from the EPA external review panel, as well as records relating to the selection of the nine individuals on peer review panels who have financial ties to the chemical industry.

“The public depends on EPA peer review panels to help ensure the products they use every day are safe,” Dingell said. “The EPA seems to have a backwards way of composing these panels. EPA is disallowing scientists who have valid public health concerns about products, while encouraging participation by so-called experts who are paid by the chemical industry.”

“Dr. Rice’s dismissal from an EPA external peer review board at industry’s request raises serious concerns about EPA’s scientific integrity,” Stupak said. “External peer review boards are a valuable tool, but only if they are free from conflicts of interest. Thorough reviews by unbiased outside experts are critical to protecting the public’s health before new chemicals are placed on the market.”

The lawmakers came across the information about the EPA peer review process as part of its ongoing investigation into the chemical Bisphenol A. The letter sent today is available online at http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_110/110-ltr.031308.EPA.BPA.pdf

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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