

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials Markup on HR 1747, the "Safe Drinking Water for Healthy Communities Act of 2007"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MARKUP ON H.R. 1747, THE "SAFE DRINKING WATER
FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ACT OF 2007"
November 8, 2007

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important markup. I commend the Vice Chair of the Subcommittee, Rep. Solis, for sponsoring this bill and for her unwavering determination to get Congress to act. I also commend your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, in advancing this important bill.

When a Federal agency fails to properly exercise its authorities and responsibilities, Congress must force action. The regulation of perchlorate is unfortunately one of those failures.

This contaminant is found in drinking water and exposure can adversely affect the human thyroid. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the health of some 43 million women may be at risk from ingesting perchlorate, and children may be even more adversely affected. The American Academy of Pediatrics is extremely concerned about the threat to children's health from perchlorate exposure.

Congress has previously given the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a deadline to issue such regulations in the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA began the process of whether to regulate perchlorate in 1998, almost 10 years ago.

The bill before us, H.R.1747, again requires EPA to set a drinking water standard. The criteria for setting a standard under the Act remain unchanged by this bill.

In the absence of EPA action, States have begun setting their own standards at varying levels, with Massachusetts at 2 parts per billion and California at 6 parts per billion. We need a Federal standard to protect all of our citizens throughout the Nation.

I also note that the Defense Department has detected perchlorate in the groundwater at more than 50 bases, yet has campaigned against efforts to regulate perchlorate for many years now. Perhaps DOD is more interested in avoiding clean-up costs than in safeguarding the health of our troops and their families.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1747.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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