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January 25, 2010

Hon. Lisa Jackson
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Jackson,

As a Member of Congress from New York's 19th Congressional District, I am proud to represent the hardworking and long suffering residents of Hopewell Junction, NY. The residents of Hopewell Junction have suffered for years due to trichloroethylene (TCE) pollution from the Hopewell Precision Superfund site. I am pleased that EPA has once again put forward a Toxicological Review, in support of the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), for TCE. However, I urge you to continue to resist pressure to defer action by sending the question of TCE toxicity to the National Academies of Science (NAS) for yet another review.


As you know, the NAS published its last report on TCE in July 2006. After a more than 18-month effort the NAS found, "The evidence on cancer and other health risks from TCE exposure has strengthened since 2001." Furthermore, it recommended, "enough information exists for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to complete a credible human health risk assessment now." That is exactly what EPA should do.

I recognize there is a need for additional research on the specific health effects of TCE exposure, but as the Government Accountability Office has repeatedly pointed out, delays "can result in substantial harm to human health, safety, and the environment." Innumerable people nationwide, and hundreds if not thousands in my district, are being exposed to TCE levels, in the air they breathe and water they drink, that meets current, outdated standards but which would be found unacceptable under EPA's draft Review.

Moreover, in May 2009 your office issued a new "Process for Development of Integrated Risk Information System Health Assessments," streamlining what had become a cumbersome, unproductive process. The TCE Review is one of the first tests of this process. Failure to complete the TCE Review in a timely fashion would undermine the entire IRIS system, setting a precedent for the continuing delay in the development and improvement of science-based exposure standards.

Therefore I urge EPA to consider carefully the comments its receives on the draft TCE Review and to act quickly to finalize new IRIS values for TCE based upon today's best science.

Sincerely,



John Hall
Member of Congress