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EPA Administrator Jackson Unveils New Administration Framework for Chemical Management Reform in the United States

SAN FRANCISCO – In a speech today at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced core principles that outline the Obama Administration's goals for legislative reform of this country's chemical management law, the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act, TSCA. In parallel with this legislative initiative, Administrator Jackson also announced plans for a major effort to strengthen EPA's current chemical management program and increase the pace of the agency's efforts to address chemicals that pose a risk to the public.

In her remarks at the Commonwealth Club, Administrator Jackson said:

"...as more and more chemicals are found in our bodies and the environment, the public is understandably anxious and confused. Many are turning to government for assurance that chemicals have been assessed using the best available science, and that unacceptable risks haven't been ignored.

Our oversight of the 21st century chemical industry is based on the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act....over the years, not only has TSCA fallen behind the industry it's supposed to regulate - it's been proven an inadequate tool for providing the protection against chemical risks that the public rightfully expects.

Today I'm announcing clear Administration principles to guide Congress in writing a new chemical risk management law that will fix the weaknesses in TSCA."

A copy of Administrator Jackson's remarks as prepared for delivery can be found online at epa.gov/newsroom.

With the leadership of Senators Barbara Boxer and Frank Lautenberg and Representatives Henry Waxman and Bobby Rush, legislation strengthening TSCA is expected to be introduced shortly. The Obama Administration's "Essential Principles for Reform of Chemicals Management Legislation" are intended to aid Congress during the legislative process. The principles, listed below, present the administration's goals for legislation that will give EPA the mechanisms and authorities to expeditiously target chemicals of concern and promptly assess and regulate new and existing chemicals in commerce:

- Chemicals should be reviewed against risk-based safety standards based on sound science and protective of human health and the environment
- Manufacturers should provide EPA with the necessary information to conclude that new and existing chemicals are safe and do not endanger public health or the environment
- EPA should have clear authority to take risk management actions when chemicals do not meet the safety standard, with flexibility to take into account sensitive subpopulations, costs, social benefits, equity and other relevant considerations.
- Manufacturers and EPA should assess and act on priority chemicals, both existing and new, in a timely manner

- Green Chemistry should be encouraged and provisions assuring Transparency and Public Access to Information should be strengthened.
- EPA should be given a sustained source of funding for implementation

Although legislative reform is necessary for an effective chemicals management program, EPA is committed to strengthening the performance of the current program while Congress considers new legislation. This enhanced plan includes the development of chemical action plans which will outline the agency's risk management efforts on those chemicals of greatest concern. EPA has identified an initial list of chemicals for possible risk management action and anticipates completing and posting an initial set of four action plans in December. It will complete and post additional chemical action plans in four-month intervals thereafter.

An additional focus will be accelerating efforts to gather the critical information from industry that the agency needs to make chemical risk determinations. This will include filling the current gaps in health and safety data on high production volume chemicals; enhanced, transparent, and more current reporting of use and exposure information; and a number of requirements for increased reporting on nanoscale chemical materials. In addition, EPA is reviewing how nanoscale materials are managed under TSCA. EPA is also reviewing ways to increase the public's access to information about chemicals.

Prioritizing chemicals for future risk management action is the final component of this effort and EPA intends to formally engage stakeholders and the public in this discussion in the coming months.

The "Essential Principles for Reform of Chemicals Management Legislation" can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/existingchemicals/pubs/principles.html>.

Detailed information on EPA's enhanced chemical management program, including information on specific components of this effort, an initial list of chemicals under consideration for Action Plan development, new hazard characterization for 100 chemicals, and risk management actions recently announced on lead and EPA's plans for banning the use of mercury in certain products, can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/existingchemicals/index.html>.