

Alaskans Descend on Capitol for a “National Stroller Brigade”

Moms, Nurses, Cancer Survivors, Highlight Science Showing Early Origins of Disease from Toxic Chemicals

May 22nd, 2012 – Washington D.C. Today two Alaskan representatives joined hundreds of moms, nurses and cancer survivors to demand action on toxic chemicals. The group rallied in support of Senator Frank Lautenberg’s (D-NJ) Safe Chemicals Act, a bill to overhaul antiquated laws governing toxic chemicals.

“The scientific evidence is significant and continues to grow. Research shows that toxic chemicals are a contributing factor in the rise of learning and developmental disabilities in this country. During my teaching career, I saw a steady increase in the number and the dramatic effects learning disabilities have in Alaska’s schools,” states Sonja Tobiessen, a retired special education teacher. “Our families deserve common sense protections from toxic chemicals.”

The National Stroller Brigade builds on 30 local events in support of the Safe Chemicals Act, in locations as diverse as Little Rock and Omaha. Hundreds of moms – many with children in tow – flew or bused into Washington to deliver 125,000 petition signatures to their Senators.

“If there is one overwhelming message from years of science, it’s that exposure to toxic chemicals early in our lives is responsible for some of the cancer, infertility, and other health problems that affect millions of Americans,” said Andy Igrejas of Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families. “However, Congress has been paralyzed. We’re here to break the gridlock and demand common sense limits on toxic chemicals.”

Moms turned out in large numbers in response to an investigative series by the Chicago Tribune, which exposed the chemical industry’s deceptive lobbying tactics to protect toxic chemicals. The moms divided up by state and the Alaska leaders delivered petition signatures to Senator Lisa Murkowski, asking her to support the Safe Chemicals Act.

Samantha Englishoe, a local policy coordinator in Anchorage, attended the Stroller Brigade as well. “There’s a common misconception in Alaska that because the land is largely undeveloped that our environment is pristine and unpolluted. Unfortunately our population has a high risk of exposure to toxic chemicals from both local and global sources. The rising rates of chronic disease in our state, which often lead the country, need to be addressed and eliminating environmental factors is an important part of the solution.”

Matthew Zachary, a young adult cancer survivor and Founder of Stupid Cancer also joined the Brigade, “I am here so that no young adult has to go through what I went through. The feelings of isolation, fear and stigma are something no child should face, and if there is an opportunity to prevent future cases of cancer, we must.”

The event shows the diverse support for the Safe Chemicals Act, bringing together people from over 30 states and with varied political backgrounds. The Safe Chemicals Act is awaiting a vote in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Participants at today’s event hope to add urgency and pressure to the pending vote.