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**PRESS RELEASE: Alaska Community Action on Toxics  
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**Much-Needed Legislation Would Protect Alaskans from Unsafe Chemicals**

*Safe Chemicals Act would reform a broken system; industry is poised to challenge*

**Anchorage, AK**— Led by Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), 29 senators today (4/10/13) introduced the Safe Chemicals Act of 2013. The legislation would provide long overdue remedies to repair the nation's broken chemical policies and limit the use of unsafe chemicals linked to cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, reproductive harm, and other illnesses.

Under current law, the Toxic Substance Control Act of 1976 (TSCA), chemicals are presumed safe until regulatory agencies can prove them harmful. There are more than 80,000 chemicals on the market, yet only a handful of them have been tested for safety. This bill would update the current law and require manufacturers of industrial chemicals to test the safety of all chemicals and would act swiftly to replace the worst chemicals with safer alternatives.

In Alaska, studies have shown that people living in northern latitudes are more highly exposed to persistent, bioaccumulative chemicals from local and distant sources.

"Indigenous Arctic peoples are among the most highly exposed people on earth to toxic chemicals, because these chemicals—DDT, PCBs, brominated flame retardants, and perfluorinated compounds, to name a few—are persistent, and drift hundreds and thousands of miles north on wind and ocean currents from where they are manufactured from more southern latitudes. These chemicals contaminate our traditional foods and affect our health and the health of our children," stated Vi Waghysi, a Yupik mother and grandmother, Native Village of Savoonga, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, and Environmental Health and Justice Program Director, [Alaska Community Action on Toxics](http://www.alaskacommunityaction.org). "We call upon Senator Begich and Senator Murkowski to take leadership roles in protecting the health of our people by co-sponsoring this important legislation."

Andy Igrejas, Executive Director of [Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families](http://www.saferchemicals.org), a national coalition of 450 health, environment, business and labor groups said:

"Americans across the political spectrum have woken up to the fact that unregulated toxic chemicals get into their homes and their bodies. It is uniformly unnerving. The Safe Chemicals Act would establish common sense limits on these chemicals that are broadly popular and long overdue."

Similar to a bill cleared by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in the 112th Congress, the Safe Chemicals Act would go a long way toward protecting Americans from chemicals before they are linked to reproductive and developmental disorders, cancers and other illnesses that are costly to treat and often preventable. Specifically, it would:

- Require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify and restrict the "worst of the worst" chemicals.
- Require basic health and safety information for chemicals as a condition for entering or remaining on the market.
- Upgrade scientific methods for assessing chemical safety.

- Arm the EPA with the authority it needs to restrict chemicals that pose health and environmental concerns.

Senator David Vitter of Louisiana is expected to introduce a competing bill which has been crafted largely at the behest of Dow Chemical, Exxon Mobil, and the American Chemistry Council. This bill would be introduced without the benefit of other voices such as scientists and public health organizations, making it the “Pro-Chemical Industry Act.” Vitter is ignoring growing scientific consensus on links between toxic chemicals and cancer, as well as failing to serve his constituents’ needs: Louisiana has the highest death rate from all cancers combined, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

“It is about time that our Alaska delegation recognizes that we are incredibly vulnerable to these toxic exposures in Alaska. We experience the highest birth defects and infant mortality (post-neonatal) rates in the nation and we are concerned that disproportionate exposures may be an important factor. It’s time for Begich and Murkowski to stop sitting on the fence and take action to protect Alaskans by co-sponsoring the Safe Chemicals Act introduced today by Senator Lautenberg.” – Pamela Miller, Executive Director, [Alaska Community Action on Toxics](#).

The two Alaska Senators are not yet among the 29 co-sponsors of the Safe Chemicals Act of 2013. Passing this bill is just plain common sense. What senator could disagree? It’s well past time for meaningful chemical policy reform, and the Safe Chemicals Act will get us there. We’re urging senators to steer clear of Vitter's bad bill and instead support Lautenberg's Safe Chemicals Act.

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[Alaska Community Action on Toxics](#) was founded in 1997 by Pamela Miller to address environmental health and justice issues facing Alaskan communities. Inspired by Saint Lawrence Island elder, Annie Alowa, Alaska Community Action on Toxics has successfully advanced local, state, national, and international actions to protect people from harmful chemical exposures and to safeguard our air, water, and food. For more information, please call 907-222-7714. [www.akaction.org](http://www.akaction.org) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter @ak\\_action](#)