



# TOXIC CHEMICALS, HEALTH AND ECONOMY

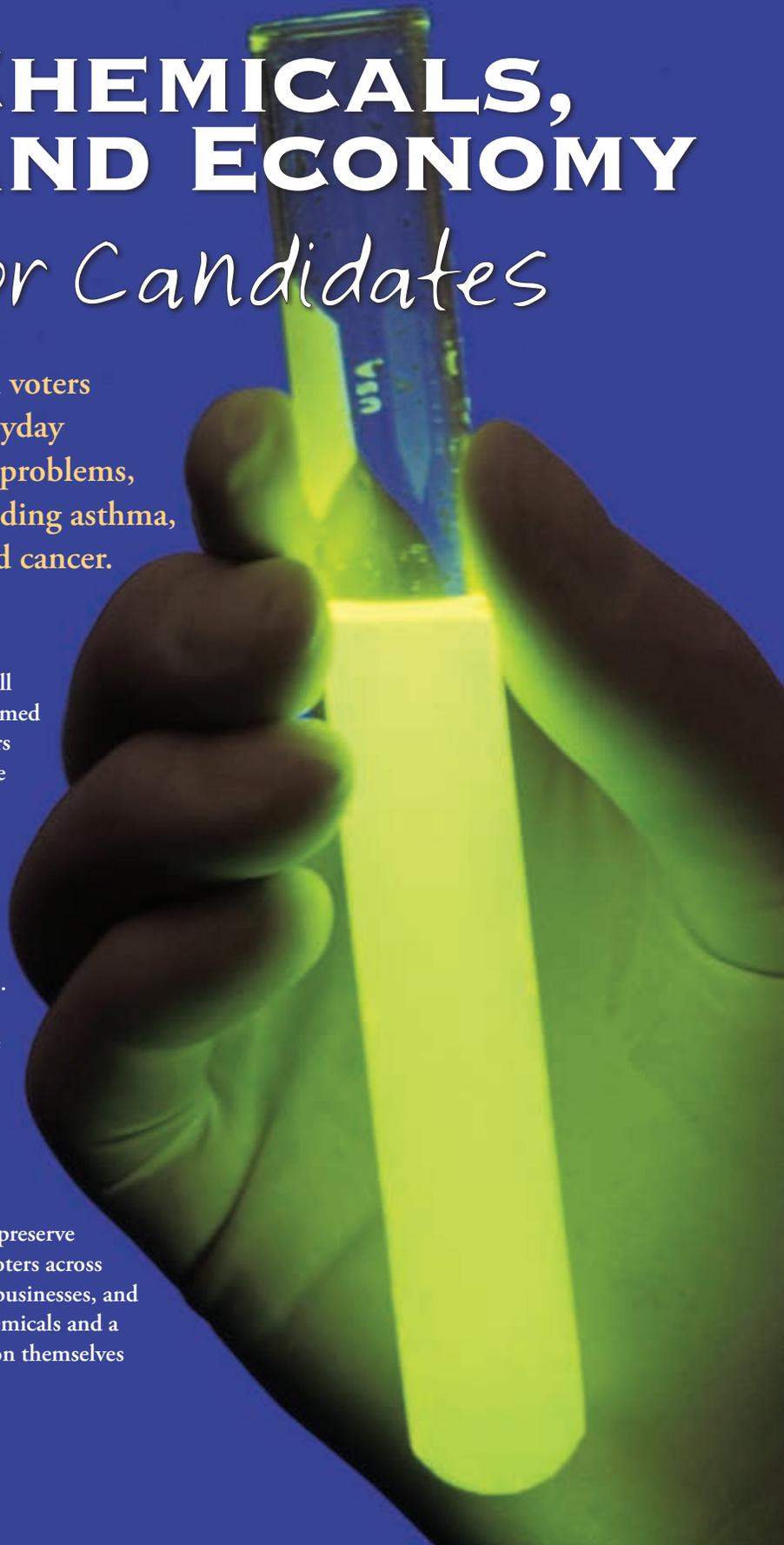
## *A Guide for Candidates*

An overwhelming majority of American voters believe that hazardous chemicals in everyday consumer products are linked to health problems, such as rapidly increasing illnesses including asthma, learning disabilities, thyroid disease, and cancer.

Voters – especially women – want to know why lead and other chemicals are in children’s toys, even though it’s well established that lead is harmful to children. They are alarmed by the presence of toxic chemicals in human blood. Voters want their communities to be protected from preventable health problems, particularly those that affect children.

Consumers are becoming more knowledgeable each day and use their dollars to support companies that provide safe, trusted products. Companies from Wal-Mart to Levi Strauss to Pfizer are adopting policies to exclude dangerous chemicals from their products and their stores. Cities and states are investing in the next economic wave – “green chemistry” solutions that protect health and the environment, and *generate new jobs*. Voters now expect state governments to ensure that the products they buy for themselves and their families do not contain toxic or untested chemicals.

Candidates who champion solutions that protect health, preserve the environment, and grow the economy will appeal to voters across the political spectrum, particularly women. Consumers, businesses, and voters are all moving toward policies that ensure safer chemicals and a stronger economy. Will candidates for state offices position themselves ahead of or behind these trends?

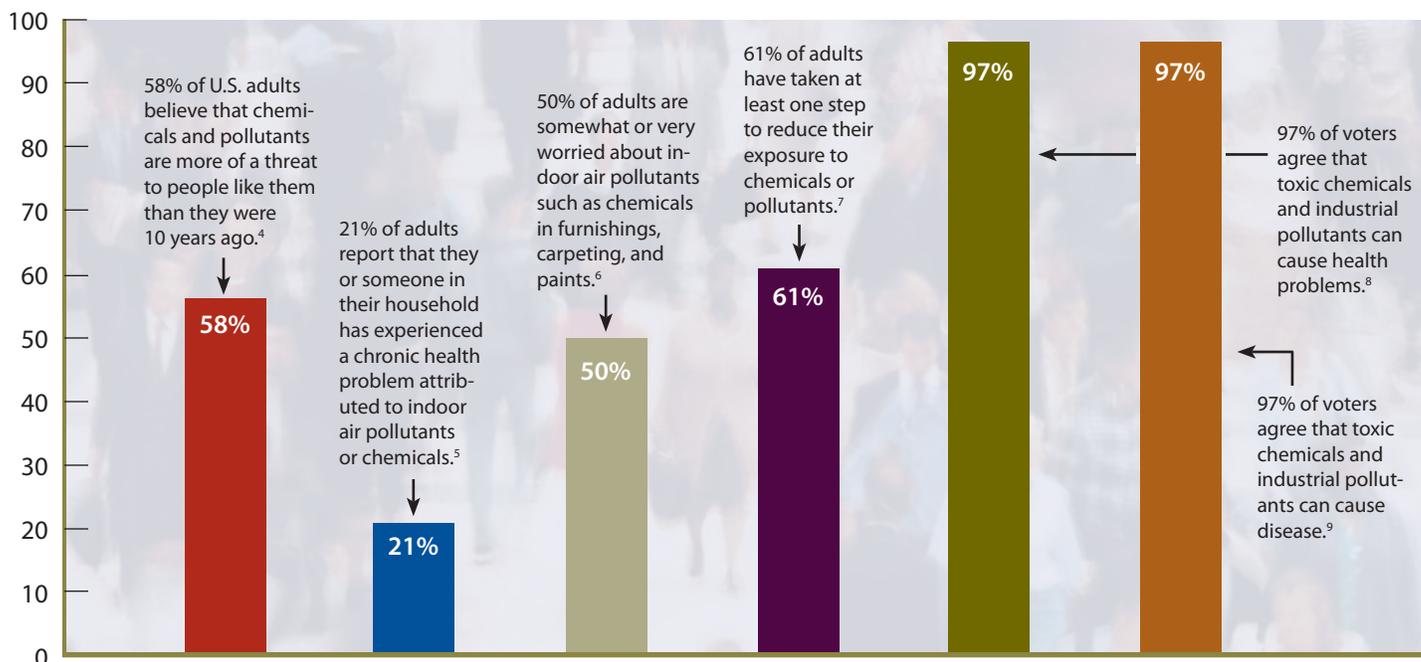


**97% of voters believe that toxic chemicals and industrial pollutants cause health problems and disease.**

LAKE SNELL PERRY & ASSOCIATES <sup>1</sup>

### Voters Support Safer Products

Women, the largest voting bloc expected at the polls in 2008, are particularly concerned about the public health consequences of exposures to toxic chemicals.<sup>2</sup> Voters surveyed support public health measures when they learn children are at a higher risk of harm from exposure to environmental toxic chemicals.<sup>3</sup>



### Toxic Chemicals & Public Health

Growing scientific evidence demonstrates that some chemicals widely used in consumer products contribute to an epidemic of chronic diseases and disorders.<sup>10</sup> These include childhood and adult thyroid disease, cancers, asthma, learning and developmental disabilities, birth defects, reproductive disorders such as infertility, and neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's disease.<sup>11</sup>

- The *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that environmental factors – including toxic chemicals – not heredity, play the principal role in causing cancer.<sup>12</sup>
- As much as 90% of childhood cancer may be explained by environmental exposures,<sup>13</sup> based on a review of 31

studies of childhood cancer that concluded that the use of pesticides in the home during pregnancy and childhood was associated with increased likelihood of brain cancer and leukemia.<sup>14</sup>

- Male reproductive health has declined since the 1990s, according to a growing number of reports citing evidence of decreased sperm count and quality, birth defects of the genitals, and increasing testicular and prostate cancers. This trend is due, at least in part, to exposure to chemicals that mimic hormones during fetal and childhood development.<sup>15</sup>



# Environmental Health Priorities and Public Service



**Environmental health issues are relevant to every community in America, and are understood by an increasing number of people who believe toxic chemicals are contributing to widespread diseases and disorders. Solutions are within reach, however, with leadership that embraces these fundamental ideas.**



## 1. Toxic Chemicals Don't Belong in Products or People

Studies have found that each one of us now has several hundred toxic chemicals in our bodies. We inhale chemicals from the air outside and inside our homes, ingest them from contaminated meat and dairy products, drink them in our water, and absorb them through our skin from everyday products like toys, skin creams and cosmetics. Many of the highest exposures occur at the workplace. While scientists are learning more about the damage one chemical can do, the health impacts of exposure to hundreds of chemicals are unknown for adults, let alone for children and fetuses, who are more vulnerable to toxic exposures. Government action to eliminate "bad actor" chemicals from products while encouraging the use of safer alternative chemicals can help protect our health and the health of our children.



## 2. Harm to Human Health Caused by Toxic Chemicals is Preventable

Through advances such as water disinfection and vaccinations, we have succeeded in nearly eradicating contagious diseases, like smallpox and polio, which once plagued entire generations. The most effective way to prevent new threats to health, including breast and other cancers, is to eliminate exposure to cancer-causing substances. New laws and policies replacing toxic chemicals with safer alternatives will help reduce the number of people who develop cancer, learning disabilities, and reproductive and neurodegenerative disorders.

## 3. The Price of Pollution Is Too High for Our Economy and Health Care System

Failure to meet the more stringent chemical standards set by the EU threatens the U.S. industry's access to that market, which is valued at \$14 billion per year and is responsible for 54,000 American jobs.<sup>16</sup> By refusing to hold the chemical industry to innovative standards that protect public health and the environment, the government is imposing great costs on the health care system and creating long-term risks to U.S. industries. Health care costs increase when people, particularly children, are exposed to toxic chemicals. One study of children's illnesses associated with environmental exposures estimated the total preventable costs in 1997 to be around \$55 billion per year.<sup>17</sup>



## 4. Safer Products Create Economic Opportunity

Consumer desire for safer products, heightened awareness of the business and health risks from toxic chemicals, and actions by states to protect their citizens have prompted a growing number of corporations, like Kaiser Permanente, Levi Strauss and Pfizer to adopt greener policies and practices. States can leverage actions by individual businesses and jumpstart economic opportunities through tax incentives, state assistance programs and partnerships with educational institutions to develop safer chemicals and products. States can also use their purchasing power to procure safer products that support in-state job creation. State investment in innovative technologies and requirements for safer products can protect citizens, preserve the environment, and expand the economy.

# The woman's vote is frankly the most powerful now in America.

REPUBLICAN POLITICAL CONSULTANT MIKE MURPHY <sup>18</sup>

## State Leadership

The federal system for regulating chemicals is broken. Policies on toxic chemicals in our air, water, and products have not kept up with the knowledge gained through science on toxic chemical impacts over the past decades.

In the absence of federal action, states have become the laboratories for creative and effective laws based on the common sense principle that hazardous or untested chemicals don't belong in consumer products if safer alternatives are available.

## Examples of state leadership include:

- Legislators in **Maine** and **Washington State** passed the first bills in the nation to phase out the use of a key toxic brominated flame retardant chemical.



- Several states – including **California**, **Maine**, and **Michigan** – are investing in “green chemistry” research and economic development as the emerging job creation engine of the 21st century.
- In **New York**, legislators helped secure \$3 million for a pollution prevention institute that will identify safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals.

- California** legislators passed first-in-the-nation legislation restricting the use of toxic phthalates in children's products.
- In **Massachusetts**, “The Safer Alternatives Bill,” which sets up an ongoing state chemical substitution program that requires priority chemicals be replaced with safer alternatives wherever feasible, has bipartisan support.

## States are Leading Toxic Chemical Reform

Voters across the spectrum respond to positive messages that protect our health and promote a clean, vibrant economy. We encourage you to publicly communicate your support for these common-sense principles:

- Toxic and untested chemicals do not belong in everyday consumer products.
- Consumers have a right to know which chemicals are in the products they buy for their families.
- Governments should shift the burden of proof by making industry prove chemicals are safe, rather than make the government prove harm.
- Manufacturers should substitute safer alternatives whenever they are available, effective, and affordable.
- States must invest in economic development based on green chemistry and clean production.

## ENDNOTES

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## RESOURCES

**CALIFORNIA** Californians for Healthy and Green Economy  
[www.changeocalifornia.org](http://www.changeocalifornia.org)

**CONNECTICUT** Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut  
[www.safehealthyct.org](http://www.safehealthyct.org)

**MAINE** Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine  
[www.cleanandhealthyme.org](http://www.cleanandhealthyme.org)

**MASSACHUSETTS** The Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow  
[www.healthytomorrow.org](http://www.healthytomorrow.org)

**MICHIGAN** Healthy Michigan, Healthy Kids  
[www.healthymichigan.net](http://www.healthymichigan.net)

**MINNESOTA** Healthy Legacy  
[www.healthylegacy.org](http://www.healthylegacy.org)

**NEW YORK** The JustGreen Partnership  
[www.just-green.org](http://www.just-green.org)

**WASHINGTON** Toxic Free Legacy  
[www.toxicfreelegacy.org](http://www.toxicfreelegacy.org)