

Congressman Peter Welch
128 Lakeside Avenue
Suite 235
Burlington, Vermont 05401

2 January 2018

Dear Peter,

I am concerned about the Trump administration's plan to continue the use of a pesticide called chlorpyrifos. This pesticide is a chemical based on a poison nerve gas used by the Nazis in World War II. It is applied to several crops grown in Vermont – especially corn. Plans were underway in the Obama administration to prohibit the use of chlorpyrifos throughout the United States. Those plans were halted by the EPA after President Trump took office. A federal Toxic Substances & Disease Registry report has found that “short-term oral exposure to low levels (milligrams) of chlorpyrifos can cause dizziness, fatigue, runny nose or eyes, salivation, nausea, intestinal discomfort, sweating, and changes in heart rate. Short-term oral exposure to much higher levels (grams) of chlorpyrifos may cause paralysis, seizures, loss of consciousness and death.” I have asked our Legislative Council Office to draft a bill that would prohibit the use of chlorpyrifos in Vermont and I will introduce it during the upcoming session of the legislature. This issue was brought to my attention by an op-ed piece in the October 29th New York Times titled “Trump’s Legacy: Damaged Brains”. The article described the federal government’s efforts to cut back on the regulatory powers of the EPA in order to protect the profits of certain chemical companies. Chlorpyrifos is manufactured by Dow AgroSciences, a division of Dow Chemical and is sold under the brand names of Lorsban and Dursban. Dow Chemical made a contribution of 1 million dollars to Trump’s Inauguration Fund.

I suspect that this is not an isolated example and that there have been many more steps taken by the Trump administration to curtail the EPA’s regulatory work. Already large numbers of career civil servants in the EPA have resigned rather than have their work compromised by the new political appointees in the agency. The career EPA official whose job was to oversee the regulation of pesticides recently resigned citing her newfound “irrelevance”. The new Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, Dr. Nancy Beck, was a lobbyist for the American Chemical Council. A recent New York Times article described her job there as one of “undermining confidence in conclusions that certain chemicals present a health threat”. It is my hope that State governments like ours will be able to pass new laws that fill some of the gaps in regulation created by the new federal appointees. Please let me know if issues like this one come to your attention and tell me if you would like another jar of tomato sauce. I could drop it off at your Burlington office.

cc: Senator Pat Leahy
Senator Bernie Sanders

Best Regards

Ben W. Joseph, State Representative