PRESS RELEASE
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Rick Engler of Work Environment Council
Wins Award for Outstanding Public Interest Work
in New Jersey

WASHINGTON, DC Sept. 8, 2008—OMB Watch is pleased to announce that Rick Engler, Founder and Director of the NJ Work Environment Council (WEC), has won a Public Interest Hall of Fame Award for outstanding public interest work in New Jersey.

The Public Interest Hall of Fame Awards are part of OMB Watch's year-long 25th Anniversary celebration. They honor the "unsung heroes" who have made their mark to make the world a better place and who will leave an important legacy. OMB Watch will recognize the winners at OMB Watch's 25th Anniversary event in Washington, DC, the evening of September 17.

Engler’s nomination stems from his 35 years of building labor and environmental alliances dedicated to social justice, government transparency, and worker and public health and safety.

Engler was founder and remains Director of WEC, the nation’s oldest statewide "blue/green" coalition bringing together workers and their unions, environmentalists, and community members. Professor Brian Mayer, in his forthcoming book Blue-Green Coalitions: Fighting for Safe Workplaces and Healthy Communities (2008), says, “New Jersey’s statewide blue-green alliance, the Work Environment Council, has accomplished perhaps more than any of the other partnerships between blues and greens.”

Founded in 1986, Engler and WEC leaders have been the driving force of successful campaigns – often facing intense opposition by New Jersey’s powerful industrial and chemical lobbies – to give workers and the public the right to know and prevent toxic dangers. Most recently, WEC won two new nationally precedent-setting state policies: requiring industrial facilities that use highly toxic chemicals to review options for safer production methods and allowing workers and their unions to accompany environmental
agency inspections and point out risks. These policies help protect workers, plant neighbors, and the environment.

Upon learning of the award, Engler said, "It’s most gratifying to receive this award, which is really because of the terrific WEC leaders and members who passionately fight for safe, secure workplaces and a healthy, sustainable environment. Receiving this honor from OMB Watch, which has made such a vital contribution to the public’s right to know about toxic dangers, makes it all the more special."

Gary D. Bass, Executive Director of OMB Watch, offered his congratulations. "Rick's work is of utmost importance to all New Jersey residents. His organization fights hard to protect thousands of workers from toxic chemical hazards and other workplace dangers, and he strives to ensure that every person in New Jersey has the opportunity to learn and know about the chemical releases in their neighborhoods. OMB Watch is proud to present Rick with one of seven Public Interest Hall of Fame Awards as we both work toward the common goal of preserving the public's environmental right to know."

The full list of award winners is available at http://www.ombwatch.org/25th. There were roughly 100 nominees considered for the award. For more information about OMB Watch, see http://www.ombwatch.org/article/archive/250.

Press and the public are welcome at the Sept. 17 celebration event. To RSVP (required), visit http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/4311 or call (202) 234-8494.

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For information about WEC, go to www.njwec.org

Rick Engler Bio

Rick Engler is founder and Director of the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), a coalition of 70 labor, community, and environmental organizations working for safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment. Engler has a 35-year record of accomplishment in the labor and environmental movements. An ongoing focus of his work is building partnerships of community, environmental, and labor organizations. He is a nationally recognized leader on chemical right-to-know-and-act issues. In 1973, while with the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, Engler helped organize the first national coalition of labor and environmental organizations to support workers striking over chemical exposures at Shell oil refineries. He is founder of the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health, the nation’s second oldest “COSH” organization. He served as Legislative and Program Director of the NJ Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO for 11 years.

Engler was a leader in successful fights to win the Worker and Community Right to Know Act; New Jersey’s major job training program, the Workforce Development Partnership Act; amendments to the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act and
Conscientious Employees Protection Act; and precedent-setting state laws for greater worker participation in hazard prevention and for safer systems of industrial safety.

He has served as a Board member of NJ Citizen Action, NJ Environmental Federation, and Consumers for Civil Justice. Engler is a 1994 recipient of the Tides Foundation national Lehman Award for Excellence in Public Advocacy, the 2001 recipient of NJ Citizen Action’s Community Service Award, and a 2007 award from the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health for his achievements on pioneering chemical safety and security policy. He served on Governor-Elect Jon Corzine’s Environmental Policy Transition Committee. He lives in Glen Rock, Bergen County.

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OMB Watch is a nonprofit watchdog government organization dedicated to promoting government accountability, citizen participation in public policy decisions, and the use of fiscal and regulatory policy to serve the public interest.

The New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC) is an alliance of labor, environmental, and community organizations that advocates for safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment.