



News from the NJ Work Environment Council

Sept/Oct 2010

Safe, Secure Jobs
and a Healthy,
Sustainable
Environment

Join us for WEC's
Annual Awards
Celebration

Friday,
November 19, 2010
7:00 PM

Rutgers Labor
Education Center
New Brunswick, NJ

2010 Honorees

Senator Frank
Lautenberg

Coalition for
Healthy Ports

Fredon Education
Association, Fredon
Parents Against the
Lines & the Fredon
Board of Education

Harriet Rubenstein
Public Policy Staff,
HPAE

Jane Nogaki, WEC
Board of Directors
Service Award

For more information
about the awardees,
sponsorship, and to
purchase tickets, go
to www.njwec.org

Safer Chemicals Needed Now

Over the past decades, the frequency of asthma has increased by 100%; impaired fertility, 40%; breast cancer, 40%; autism diagnosis, 1,000%; and 30% more babies are born prematurely. Increasingly, science has found that these health problems are linked to chemical exposure, according to Charlotte Brody, chemicals policy expert for the BlueGreen Alliance, who spoke at WEC's workshop *Uniting Nurses and the Public for Chemicals Policy Reform* on October 22nd.* *Such* concerns were also highlighted the next week at a hearing in Newark chaired by Senator Frank Lautenberg on children's environmental health. At the hearing Dr. Frederica Perera, Director of Columbia University's Center for Children's Environmental Health Studies, spoke about studies of pregnant women and their children in New York City, which found that 80 to 100% of those tested positive for toxics linked to disrupting the endocrine system. These chemicals included phthalates, used in plastics; bisphenol A, used in plastic water bottles and food can linings; and polybrominated diphenyl ethers, used as flame retardants.

Workers in many jobs have long been considered "canaries in the coal mines", suffering the effects of high exposures. Now research reveals that children face enormous threats from pollutants because of differences in their bodies, activity patterns, and development. Early chemical exposures may have serious consequences throughout a child's life. **

The 1976 *Toxic Substances Control Act* (TSCA) was supposed to give the U.S. Environmental Protection



Charlotte Brody, chemicals policy expert for the BlueGreen Alliance and Senator Frank Lautenberg.

Agency (EPA) power to regulate chemicals that pose risks to children and health. However, TSCA has never worked. In 1991, a federal court ruled that TSCA didn't give EPA power to ban asbestos, which causes cancer and other fatal lung diseases. (Asbestos is banned by 40 other countries.) Subsequently, EPA stopped trying to use the law to restrict chemicals.

There is now a national call to reform TSCA. *The Safe Chemicals Act of 2010* (S 3209) has been introduced by Senator Lautenberg; and the *Toxic Chemicals Safety Act of 2010* (HR 5820) has been introduced in the House by Congressmen Waxman and Rush.

WEC supports these bills for three reasons:

- 1) Instead of EPA having to prove a chemical is dangerous, companies would have to prove that their products are safe. This legislation would shift the burden of proof, requiring EPA to request information from manufacturers on health and environmental hazards, starting with the most hazardous substances. EPA would have authority to set restrictions.
- 2) Everyone that uses chemicals would have information they need to protect themselves. Under TSCA, manufacturers

have been able to keep secret an enormous amount of data. TSCA reform would require companies to disclose far more information if they want to keep their chemicals on the market. 3) TSCA reform could help make the US a global leader in "green" chemical production and make our nation more competitive with Western Europe, which recently adopted chemical policy reforms. For example, paints could be made without toxic fumes and plastics could be made from vegetables instead of oil. Such innovations could create new job opportunities for workers in New Jersey, where chemical-related jobs continue to decline.

WEC will be working with the BlueGreen Alliance and other labor, health, and environmental allies to build support for fundamental TSCA reform.

* Thanks to University of Maryland's School of Nursing, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments for support of WEC's workshop.

**To hear or read the testimony of EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, CNN's Sanjay Gupta, M.D., and others, go to <http://lautenberg.senate.gov/> and search the "Newsroom" for for October 26, 2010.



WEC Annual Membership Meeting Is Coming Up

Chris Christie for President? — believe it or not — is the theme of WEC's Annual Membership Meeting set for Thursday evening, December 9, 2010 in Trenton. Join us to discuss Governor Christie's labor and environmental policies during his Administration's initial year and to discuss next steps to *Save Our Sensible Safeguards Campaign*.

The meeting will take place at NJEA, 180 West State St, Trenton. Free, secure parking is available *behind* NJEA. A buffet dinner will be served at 6:15 PM, and meeting will begin at 7 PM. A Dinner Donation of \$12 is requested. Please tell us you will participate by e-mailing info@njwec.org Questions? Contact Debra Coyle McFadden at dcoyle@njwec.org or (609) 695-7100, ext 306 or Rick Engler at rengler@njwec.org or (201) 389-3189. We value your views! You do not need to be a WEC member to participate.

Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

Join the growing BlueGreen Alliance (BGA) February 8-10, 2011, for the fourth *Good Jobs, Green Jobs National Conference* at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. The Conference is a leading forum for sharing strategies for building a green economy that creates good jobs, reduces global warming, and prevents toxic contamination in our workplaces and environment. WEC is proud to be BGA's New Jersey affiliate, which now includes these thirteen organizations: United Steelworkers; Sierra Club; Communications Workers of America; Natural Resources Defense Council; Laborers' International Union of North America; National Wildlife Federation; Service Employees International Union; Union of Concerned Scientists; Utility Workers Union of America; American Federation of Teachers; Amalgamated Transit Union; Sheet Metal Workers' International Association; and United Auto Workers. For more information, go to www.bluegreenalliance.org

Victory for Worker Families

In August, an appellate court ruled that Bonnie Anderson was entitled to \$7 million in damages due to secondary exposure to asbestos. This decision is

based on a 2006 state Supreme Court decision that said people with secondary exposure to asbestos can sue companies they believe are liable. It also upheld that her husband, John, was entitled to \$500,000 plus interest from Exxon. John worked at Exxon's Linden Bayway Refinery from 1969 to 2004, the first six years were spent removing insulation to fix pumps and filters. Exxon gave workers helmets, but not respirators or uniforms and failed to inform them that they were being exposed to asbestos. After years of washing asbestos laden clothes for her husband, Bonnie Anderson contracted mesothelioma, a type of lung cancer. Bonnie has suffered years of surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation. She now is an activist for mesothelioma awareness and support groups. Her victory reaffirms that companies are responsible for providing a safe workplace and for secondary exposures to workers' families. The company plans to appeal the case.

Inside WEC

- Thanks to **The Fund for New Jersey** for their important financial support of WEC public education efforts and our *Save Our Sensible Safeguards Campaign* and to the **Health Professionals and Allied Employees** toward continuation of our Safe Work, Safe Care training program for hospital and nursing home workers.

- Congratulations to WEC industrial hygiene consultant **Eileen Senn**, who has been recognized by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health for her long time contributions to worker safety and health. Eileen is author of WEC's *Preventing Workplace Hazards; An Action Guide for New Jersey Workers and Unions; the NJ Education Association's (NJEA) health and safety manual; and more than 45 safety and health articles for NJEA's newspaper that reaches 200,000 teachers and school staff and provides vital inform-*

*ation for protecting our children...kudos to **John Shinn**, Subdistrict Director, United Steelworkers (USW) for his well deserved awards from the Burlington and Mercer AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils. John, a former glass worker and rank and file safety and health activist, is a long-time WEC Board member. USW is the largest manufacturing and chemicals workers union in New Jersey.*

- WEC Director **Rick Engler** addressed more than 1,000 participants at the USW annual safety, health, and environment conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. on new rights of workers and union representatives to participate in EPA inspections at high hazard facilities. In his remarks, Engler thanked **Teamsters Local 877**, their President **Doc Dougherty**, and Executive Board member (and WEC President) **John Pajak** for their leadership to win this new policy.

New WEC Publications

WEC has produced five new publications. They will soon be available online at www.njwec.org:

- *What Are Risk Management Plans and Why You Should Care*; and
- *Using the Federal Reading Rooms To Research Worst-Case Chemical Release Scenarios*; both focus on the Environmental Protection Agency's Risk Management Program for highly hazardous chemicals; and
- *Finding Chemical Exposures and Negotiating Fixes*, which offers practical approaches to protecting worker health, given inadequate federal OSHA regulations; and
- A flyer on OSHA's Process Safety Management rule, which is being distributed to thousands of workers facing extremely hazardous chemicals; and
- A flyer on "Benefits of WEC Membership for Unions and Labor Organizations".

Calendar

Friday, November 19 - *WEC's Annual Awards Celebration*, Rutgers Labor Education Center, New Brunswick, 7 pm. Purchase tickets at www.njwec.org.

Thursday, December 9 - *WEC's Annual Membership Meeting*: "Chris Christie for President?", NJ Education Association. See details in article above.

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Back issues of *WEC@WORK* are available at www.njwec.org. Rick Engler & Denise Patel, Editors. WEC is an alliance of 70 labor, environmental and community organizations working together for safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment. WEC Staff: Rick Engler, Director; Debra Coyle McFadden, Assistant Director; Cecelia Leto, Project Coordinator; Denise Patel, Campaign Organizer. Staff are members of USW or CWA.

CWA Local 38010 / USW 4-149