

# H.R. 3313 - Environmental Health Research Act of 2005

## H.R. 3313, The Environmental Health Research Act

This bill authorizes the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to develop multidisciplinary research centers regarding women's health, and the health of their offspring, and disease prevention. The bill also authorizes the director of NIEHS to conduct and coordinate a research program on hormone disruption.

### WHY THIS BILL IS NEEDED

In July 2005, Congresswoman Slaughter participated in an important study sponsored by the Environmental Working Group and Commonweal to determine what toxic substances she had been exposed to over her lifetime. The results revealed that she had some 271 harmful substances in her blood. These chemicals included PCBs and Teflon, as well as other toxic chemicals used to make insecticides, electrical cables, florescent lamps and even automobile engine oil.

Cord blood from ten newborn babies was also tested. Shockingly, they were born polluted. On average, each one had some 200 chemicals in their blood, before they ever touched a blanket, a bassinet, a car seat, or even took their first breath.

More than 80,000 new synthetic chemicals have been introduced into our environment since the 1950s. Hormones are natural chemicals secreted into our bloodstream in carefully measured amounts. Hormones control and adjust many body functions. For example, the thyroid hormone adjusts a person's metabolic rate, affecting their appetite and temperature. There is reason to believe that exposure to these synthetic chemicals disrupts hormone function and contributes to increased incidences of diseases. This would help explain the steep rise in the occurrence of childhood cancers, testicular cancer, hypospadias, juvenile diabetes, attention deficit disorders, thyroid disorders, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, and autoimmune disorders in the U.S. over the last 30 years.

While there is mounting evidence into the association between environmental chemical pollutants and hormone disruption, the research remains limited. Increased investments in research now could prevent and treat a broad range of diseases and conditions for future generations.

We need to research the impact of these chemical pollutants now. Only then will we have the information we need both to detoxify and also to prevent developmental disabilities and other environmentally related diseases in future generations.

## WHAT THIS BILL WOULD DO

H.R. 3313, the Environmental Health Research Act authorizes the NIEHS to establish multidisciplinary research centers to investigate how environmental factors may be related to adverse women's health conditions, as well as those of their children. H.R. 3313 also authorizes NIEHS to conduct comprehensive research on chemicals in our environment that disrupt hormones.

### Multidisciplinary research centers

The Director of NIEHS, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health, shall make grants to public or nonprofits to develop and operate 6 centers for conducting multidisciplinary research on environmental factors related to the development of women's health conditions.

Centers will conduct basic and clinical research, develop training protocols, conduct training programs, develop continuing education programs and disseminate information to health professionals and the public. Centers should give priority to activities that would prevent conditions and diseases from manifesting in women. Centers may provide stipends for health professionals enrolled in programs.

Centers will collaborate with community organizations and work with women with disorders that appear to stem from environmental factors in that community. Centers should also share information with each other.

### Hormone disruption research program

The Director of NIEHS shall establish a comprehensive program to conduct research on the impact of chemicals affecting the health of women and children through disruption of hormone systems. In cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Director of NIEHS shall conduct research on the occurrence of hormone-disrupting chemicals in the environment and the effects on ecological and wildlife health. Coordinate the design of a multi-agency research initiative on hormone disruption within the US and with other countries.

The program shall collect and disseminate scientifically valid information on 1) the human health effects of hormone disrupting chemicals, with an emphasis on exposures to low doses of chemicals during critical life stages of development

and focus particularly on the impact of prenatal exposures on children's health; and 2) the extent of human exposure to hormone disrupting chemicals in residential and occupational settings.

The program shall also research 1) how hormone disrupting substances interact with biological systems, 2) methods for in vitro and in vivo methods to screen and test hormone disruption, and 3) the levels and fate of hormone disrupting chemicals in the environment.

The Secretary of HHS shall establish the Hormone Disruption Research Interagency Commission to advise the Directors of NIEHS and USGS on an agenda for carrying out research. The commission will consist of 14 department or agency members.

There will also be a Hormone Disruption Research Panel to advise the Director on scientific content for the program. The panel will consist of 15 voting members appointed by the President and shall be appointed for a term of 3 years with the option to extend for another 2 years.

#### GROUPS SUPPORTING H.R. 3313

American Association on Mental Retardation

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, & Neonatal Nurse

Breast Cancer Fund

Children's Health Environmental Coalition (CHEC)

Environmental Health Working Group

Health Care Without Harm

Institute for Children's Environmental Health

The Learning Disabilities Association

The World Wildlife Fund

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Congresswoman Slaughter first introduced the Environmental Health Research Act in 2000. She reintroduced this bill on July 14, 2005. H.R. 3313 has been referred to the Energy and Commerce Committee, and also to the Committees on Resources, and Science. Senator Landrieu has introduced the Senate companion bill (S. 1500).