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OCTOBER 27, 2009: MARKEY URGES EPA NOT TO WEAKEN RADIATION PROTECTION STANDARDS

In letter to Administrator Jackson, Markey Expresses Concern over Pending Bush Administration Standards

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson raising serious concerns over the potential for weakening federal policies designed to protect the public from the potentially dangerous effects of radiation. In the letter, Chairman Markey expressed concern that the EPA **“may still be considering a series of actions proposed by the last Administration that could weaken radiation standards and protective guidance, ignoring sound scientific recommendations and dismantling decades of EPA policies protection of the public from ionizing radiation.”**

While the Obama Administration has vowed to put an end to the previous administration’s politicization science, Markey expressed concern over several disturbing initiatives commenced during the prior administration that are still pending before the EPA.

One pending issue is the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air’s (ORIA) draft “Blue Book” released in December 2008, which has historically formed the basis for EPA’s radiation protection regulations. This draft was purported to take into account scientific findings from a National Academy of Sciences Study called BEIR VII, partially sponsored and funded by EPA, which found that even the smallest radiation dose has the potential to cause a small increase in risk to humans. However, in the released draft “Blue Book” ORIA proposes using risk figures that are almost all less protective than the National Academy of Sciences had recommended.

Chairman Markey also expressed concern over the EPA’s draft Protective Action Guidance for radiolog

incidents, in which the last Administration proposed a different standard for radiation exposures followir wide range of nuclear emergencies than are currently in place in the Safe Drinking Water Act and other environmental statutes. These guidelines actually allow for levels of radioactivity that are thousands of times higher than the requirements found in traditional toxic clean-up guidance. Additionally, long-term clean-up standards are proposed that are so remarkably high that they could result in a cancer risk that EPA itself estimates at a breathtaking 1 in 4.

Finally, Markey asked a series of questions related to EPA’s use of the “Reference Man” method to evaluate compliance with radiation regulations. This model assumes that the typical exposed individual an average-sized adult male, even though pregnant women, children and other vulnerable populations could be much more impacted by radiation exposures.

“From disposing of nuclear waste to protecting the water we drink, we must do everything in ou power to ensure that government policy follows the strongest possible standards governing exposure to radiation,” said Markey. **“Why should people who have been victimized by a nuclear attack or accident be further subjected to a relaxation of the radiation protection standards EPA has previously deemed safe? The stakes are simply too high to accept anything less than the strongest scientific recommendations.”**

Chairman Markey requested answers to his questions no later than Tuesday November 16, 2009.

A copy of the letter can be found here: http://markey.house.gov/docs/102709_epa_radiation_letterfn.pc

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Medford
 5 High Street
 Suite 101
 Medford, MA 02155
 p: (781) 396-2900

Framingham
 188 Concord Street
 Suite 102
 Framingham, MA 01702
 p: (508) 875-2900

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