

CONGRESSMAN ED MARKEY PRESS RELEASE

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FEBRUARY 25, 2010: MARKEY: WE MUST DO ALL WE CAN TO KEEP OUR DRINKING WATER SAFE

ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS, FOUND IN WATER, POSE HEALTH RISKS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), the Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Energy and Environment Subcommittee and the author of a bill to establish a federal ban on the chemical Bisphenol A in all food and beverage containers, issued the following statement today at a hearing entitled “Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals in Drinking Water: Risks to Human Health and the Environment:”

“Lately, not a day goes by where the public is not reminded of the presence of toxic chemicals in the air we breathe and the water we drink, and the potential harmful effects that these chemicals can have on public health and the environment.

“Just last week a local newspaper warned that the Potomac River and other mid-Atlantic rivers are laced with toxins that may be responsible for bizarre deformities in fish, frogs and other wildlife that come in contact with the contaminated water. This includes male fish that have begun growing female sexual organs, and female fish that can no longer reproduce.

“W.C. Fields once said, ‘I never drink water because of the disgusting things fish do in it.’

“Today, people wonder whether they should be drinking the water that comes out of their taps because of the disgusting things it is doing to the fish, and possibly to them.

“There are serious concerns that the same chemicals that are responsible for these deformities in wildlife may also have similar effects in humans and may be the culprit for the widespread increase in human disorders such as infertility, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. These contaminants, which fall under a class of chemicals called Endocrine Disruptors, are pervasively showing up in our nation’s waterways, including in water that millions of people rely on for drinking.

“For example, bisphenol A, which is used in many plastic containers and as a lining in canned food, is associated with developmental and reproductive disorders in humans. To this end, the FDA recently announced that it is concerned about these health effects. I’ve got a bill to ban its use in food and beverage containers, and hope we can finally start limiting our exposure.

“Triclosan is another example of an endocrine disruptor which is used as an antimicrobial in hand soaps. Triclosan has been shown to interfere with the development of the brain and nervous systems of laboratory animals and I am concerned about the consequences on human health. I have asked both FDA and EPA what they plan on doing about evaluating and regulating triclosan’s widespread use.

“Perchlorate, used as an ingredient in rocket fuel, is pervasively showing up in drinking water all across the nation. We are all looking for that extra boost in the morning, but I would personally

rather stick to a large cup of coffee.

“Massachusetts is one of the few States that regularly monitors for perchlorate and has also set a statewide water standard for the contaminant. Exposure to this chemical during pregnancy can cause serious neurological deficits and could be one of the contributing causes of increased attention deficient disorders and other cognitive problems in our nation’s children.

“All of these dangerous chemicals – along with others whose health effects are less well-known- have been found by government scientists to be contained in our nation’s surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

“In 1996, the Food Quality Protection Act and Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments authorized EPA to screen for endocrine disruptors found in sources of drinking water. In response to this statute, the EPA established the Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program, designed to evaluate the safety of chemicals that might cause adverse health effects to the body’s endocrine system.

“EPA’s progress with this screening program has been slow, but late last year, the first 67 chemicals designated for screening were announced and the process of collecting information has finally begun.

“Given the advancements in science and technology that have occurred over the last decade, it is appropriate to reevaluate what we know about endocrine disruptors and assess the effectiveness of EPA’s screening program in identifying and evaluating the safety of endocrine disruptors found in sources of drinking water.

“I would like to thank all of the witnesses for attending today and I look forward to hearing your testimony.”