

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

September 11, 2014

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-329 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Candice S. Miller  
Chairman  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McCarthy, and Chairman Miller:

Since our last letter in 2011, we remain concerned about the potential health and environmental effects of your current choice to use polystyrene foam products in the House of Representatives cafeterias. Two recent developments illustrate the hazards posed by these materials and highlight that action to remove them from our cafeterias is long overdue. On July 28, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released its Review of the Styrene Assessment in the National Toxicology Programs 12th Report on Carcinogens, strongly supporting the listing of styrene as reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen. That same week, Washington, D.C., joined the growing list of over 100 cities that have chosen to ban polystyrene products for health and environmental reasons. It is past time for Congress to do the same.

The NAS report notes that “many people in the United States are exposed” to styrene through “food (from migration of styrene from polymer packaging materials), cigarette smoke,

vehicle exhaust, and other forms of combustion and incineration of styrene polymers.”<sup>1</sup> The NAS report also found occupational exposures from the production of styrene. The House of Representatives’ continued use of polystyrene containers perpetuates these exposures for those who eat in our cafeterias, those who manufacture the containers we use, and those who live in the areas where our waste is incinerated.

These exposures pose potential health risks. Studies cited by the National Toxicology Program and the NAS found lymphohematopoietic, pancreatic, and esophageal cancers in people with occupational exposures to styrene.<sup>2</sup> Animal studies also showed increased incidence of cancer from both ingestion and inhalation of styrene, and mechanistic analyses “provided convincing evidence that genotoxicity is observed in cells from humans who were exposed to styrene.”<sup>3</sup> Based on those studies, the NAS committee concluded that “compelling evidence exists to support a listing of styrene as, at a minimum, *reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen*.”<sup>4</sup>

Our use of these dangerous products also harms the waterways in Washington, D.C.. Trash is a significant problem for the health of the Anacostia River, which is why the river has had in place a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for trash since 2010.<sup>5</sup> According to tracking by the Anacostia Watershed Society, foam makes up about 30% of trash in the river.<sup>6</sup> The city is taking action to reduce polystyrene pollution in the watershed by banning the use of polystyrene food containers and requiring the use of compostable or recyclable food service products. Congress shares responsibility for pollution in Washington and we should take the same action.

For more than three years, House members and staff, as well as constituents and visitors to the Hill who eat in our cafeterias, have needlessly been exposed to this dangerous chemical.

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<sup>1</sup> National Research Council of the National Academies, *Review of the Styrene Assessment in the National Toxicology Program 12th Report on Carcinogens* (July 28, 2014) (online at [www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=18725](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=18725)).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 13. [Italicized in original]

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Department of the Environment and District of Columbia Department of the Environment – Natural Resources Administration, *Total Maximum Daily Loads of Trash for the Anacostia River Watershed, Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, Maryland and the District of Columbia* (Sept. 21, 2010) (online at [www.green.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddoe/publication/attachments/Final\\_Anacostia\\_Trash\\_TMDL.pdf](http://www.green.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddoe/publication/attachments/Final_Anacostia_Trash_TMDL.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> Anacostia Watershed Society, *Nash Rush Trash Trap Project* (online at [www.anacostiaws.org/programs/stewardship/monitoring/nash-run-trash-trap](http://www.anacostiaws.org/programs/stewardship/monitoring/nash-run-trash-trap)).

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We have also been contributing to the problem of litter in the District of Columbia. We hope you will reconsider the use of polystyrene foam in our cafeterias.

Sincerely,

Herb G. Waxman

Paul Brummen

Tim Van Holler

Ed Palatt

Michael M. Hauer

John Dingell

Grace S. Napolitano

Ernst Parn

Niki Bangas

Alvin Harris

Raul M. Grijalva

Alfred L. Hartig

John Schatz

Robert Welch

Bill Pascrell Jr

Rob A Brady

Jim Langevin

Jul H. Ah

Ann Marie Foster

Inna E. Snow

Frank Pallone Jr.

Jackie Speer

Mr R

Angela D. Bell

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Alan Lowenthal

Jan Lau

Elizabeth H. Esty

Mik Amigley

Paul Dutt

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Doris O. Matsui

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