

AFL-CIO

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

October 16, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the nomination of Dr. Michael Dourson for the position of Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA office for which Dr. Dourson is nominated to lead, is responsible for implementing the Toxic Substances Control Act, which was updated last year through bipartisan legislation. The updated law requires EPA to not only set safe levels of chemical exposures for the public, but also especially vulnerable populations, including workers.

Dr. Dourson has a long history of close ties to the chemical industry. Funded by chemical companies throughout his career, he has consistently recommended "safe" levels of chemicals that were tens to thousands times higher than levels recommended by established scientific organizations. These include a number of chemicals directly affecting the health of workers:

- **diacetyl**—a flavoring chemical used in microwave popcorn which causes a deadly lung disease—where Dourson was hired by food companies and proposed a “safe” workplace level 20-40 times less protective than NIOSH and ACGIH guidelines.
- **1-bromopropane**—an industrial solvent which causes neurological and reproductive disorders and cancer—where, hired by the chemical’s producers, he proposed a standard 200 times less protective than today’s recommended workplace guidelines.

- **flame retardants**—chemicals used in upholstered furniture and other household products, which pose a hazard to firefighters. In work paid by the North American Flame Retardant Alliance (NAFRA), a group of sponsored by the chemical industry, Dourson concluded that the flame retardant tetrabromobisphenol A (TBBPA)—a chemical which EPA currently has under review—is not likely to be a reproductive or developmental toxicant. Numerous other studies indicate just the opposite.
- **chlorpyrifos**—a pesticide which causes neurological damage to farmworkers and children—where Dourson, working for Dow Agrosiences, recommended exposure levels much higher and much less protective than those recommended by EPA.

Dr. Dourson has made similar findings in his work on behalf of industry groups on tobacco, perflouroctonoic acid (PFOA), and 1,4 dioxane, recommending levels that were not just not protective, but were harmful to people's health.

The role of the government is to protect the public's health, not harm it. The mission of EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention is to protect the public, workers and the environment from risks from pesticides and toxic chemicals. Based on his extensive record and close ties to industry, it is clear that Michael Dourson cannot and should not be entrusted with this important responsibility.

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to reject his nomination.

Sincerely,



William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department

WS/PS/lkr

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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