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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

November 5, 2004

ANDREW WHEELER, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
 KEN CONNOLLY, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
 Administrator
 Environmental Protection Agency
 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
 Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Leavitt:

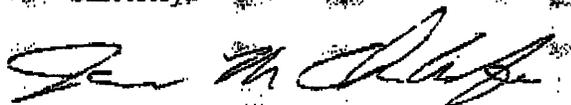
I have been made aware, by several Oklahoma constituents, that the EPA Office of Research and Development is currently moving forward with plans to update its health assessment of formaldehyde within the Integrated Risk Information System program. I am writing to express my sincere concern the Agency may be moving ahead with the database revision, which will affect the thousands of everyday uses of formaldehyde, without the benefit of the latest and best science.

The IRIS database is the underpinning for several other areas of environmental regulation, such as MACT rules under the Clear Air Act. Due to the potential wide-ranging effect on regulation, I believe it is crucial that the numbers reflected in that database be derived from the best possible science. One of the key studies on the health effects of formaldehyde is a study by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). This study has come up with some preliminary findings (that conflict with other studies) that suggest that there may be an association, but not a cause and effect, between formaldehyde and certain cancers. It is my understanding that NCI has decided to update this study to correct data and analysis inaccuracies and collect a more robust set of data. This effort will take, at most, 18 months to complete.

I am not aware of any statutory or regulatory immediacy that would necessitate revision of the IRIS database before NCI completes its important research. However that update turns out, it will provide EPA with a more thorough and more reliable understanding of the underlying science. I would encourage the Agency, therefore, to hold off the revision until the best science is available so it can make sound, accurate and defensible decisions.

I would appreciate if you could provide me with a timeline for your efforts. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my staff, Mary Anne Dolbeare (202-224-6168) or John Shanahan (202-224-8072).

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe