

Harkin, Chambliss Reintroduce Measure to Reduce Dangerous Pollutants

March 03, 2009

Harkin, Chambliss Reintroduce Measure to Reduce Dangerous Pollutants

Washington, D.C. — Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and Ranking Republican Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) today reintroduced legislation to implement pesticide-related obligations under agreements for a worldwide group of 12 toxic chemicals known as “POPs,” persistent organic pollutants. Examples of these chemicals are DDT, PCBs, and dioxins.

“Passage of this legislation will help clear the path for ratification of three important agreements to reduce worldwide levels of these dangerous chemicals, all of which are already illegal in the United States,” said Harkin. “The United States has not been able to participate in this global effort for years since we have not ratified the agreements. We must act now.”

“This measure would put the U.S. at the table where decisions on these chemicals are made,” said Sen. Chambliss. “Our observer-only status limits our ability to participate in the critical decisions that affect American businesses and economic interests and our environment and public health. I urge my colleagues to ratify the treaties and support this measure so we can reclaim our rightful place as a world leader in the safe management of hazardous chemicals.”

The implementation legislation would amend the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) to implement three international agreements concerning Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). POPs are toxic chemicals that remain in the environment for an extended period of time and can bio-accumulate in the food chain. This bill would establish notice and comment procedures to ensure the American public has an opportunity to have input into federal action related to decisions by the parties to the conventions. The bill also would add new export reporting and labeling requirements to ensure compliance with U.S. obligations under the Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC) Convention. Specifically, the convention requires all signatory nations to stop the production and use of 12 listed POPs. Parties to the convention also agree to control sources of POPs by-products to reduce releases and provide for the safe handling and disposal of POPs in an environmentally sound manner. The convention includes a science-based procedure to allow other POPs to be added and provides technical and financial assistance to help developing countries manage and control POPs.

Passage of this bill would help clear the way for Senate ratification of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs Convention), the Aarhus Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the Geneva Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP POPs Protocol) and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (PIC Convention).

While the Harkin-Chambliss bill addresses FIFRA-related provisions, the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) and the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) need to be amended in order to implement the treaties.

###

