

September 19, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Barasso and Carper:

We write to urge you to oppose the nomination of Michael Dourson to be Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. Dourson has spent decades playing down concerns about toxic chemicals for his industry clients—chemicals tied to cancer, infertility, severe lung damage, developmental impairment and other serious health concerns.

From his work on tobacco to his work defending chemicals like PFOA, TCE, chlorpyrifos, and 1,4-dioxane that are impacting communities across the country, Dourson has proven to be a reliable ally for industry clients rather than someone who will work to protect public health and the environment, as this position requires.

The position Dourson would hold at the helm of EPA's toxics office is of critical importance to public health and the environment. If confirmed, Dourson would oversee implementation of the newly amended Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The reforms made last year to TSCA provide a significant opportunity to better ensure that chemicals used in products and materials we encounter every day in our homes, schools and workplaces are safe. Critical decisions about the implementation of the reformed law will fall to the current EPA and to the person leading this office.

Dourson would also lead the EPA program charged with ensuring the safety of pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). In light of the controversial decision made by Administrator Scott Pruitt to reject the recommendations of EPA scientists to ban chlorpyrifos, the credibility of the pesticide review process cannot afford to be further compromised.

Unfortunately, Michael Dourson is the wrong man for this job. Over the last two decades, Dourson has worked as a toxicologist-for-hire, with his firm Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment (TERA), recently migrated into a center at the University of Cincinnati. Contrary to TERA and the center's claims of "independence," they have deep financial ties to the chemical industry, tobacco industry, and other major corporations and industry groups—many of the same entities he would now be charged with regulating.

In fact, Dourson or his firm have been paid by dozens of chemical companies or trade associations to work on dozens of different chemicals. Those chemicals include several that are right now under active review by the very office Dourson has been nominated to lead, including trichloroethylene (TCE), 1,4-dioxane and chlorpyrifos.

Compounding the concern is that Dourson's firm routinely played down health concerns about the chemicals his clients produced or used. As multiple news articles have documented, Dourson and his firm have been the go-to firm for companies seeking to lessen or muddy concerns and press for less health-protective standards.

His work for industry went beyond science issues to include developing and running the website "kids+chemicalsafety.org" that was funded by the main chemical industry trade association. While it promised information about "chemical hazards and safe use of chemicals around children," the website actually delivered chemical industry spin that shifted the burden of protection onto parents and consumers, for example, by suggesting that parents concerned about toxic chemicals in toys ensure that children keep the toys out of their mouths and wash their hands after playing with them.

Such a long record of downplaying concerns about toxic chemicals means that Dourson should not be entrusted with protecting our children and families from toxic chemicals. Please reject Michael Dourson's nomination.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Earthjustice
Environmental Defense Action Fund
Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Earth
Green For All
Hip Hop Caucus
League of Conservation Voters
Moms Clean Air Force
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Power Shift Network
Public Citizen
Save EPA
Sierra Club
Union of Concerned Scientists

CC: Members of the Committee on Environment and Public Works