

A growing chorus is speaking out against legislation to update federal chemical safety law that was introduced by Sens. Tom Udall, D-N.M., and David Vitter, R-La.

Here's what critics of the industry's bill are saying:

Ken Cook, President and Co-Founder, [Environmental Working Group](#), said:

“This chemical industry proposal is worse than the current law. It fails to meet even basic criteria for effective reform that protects our children’s health. There is a mounting body of evidence that links chemical exposures to adverse health effects. And this is the best we can do?”

Erin Brockovich, Consumer advocate, [told The Hill newspaper](#):

“This bill does not make chemicals safer. I wouldn’t even consider it in my opinion a [Toxic Chemicals Control Act, or TSCA] bill. It’s an industry bill... If we take away states rights and dump this back on the EPA, which is already overburdened, understaffed and without state funds, to me that’s insanity.”

Linda Reinstein, President and Co-Founder of [Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization](#), said:

“Any ‘chemical safety’ bill that does not ban asbestos isn’t worth the paper it’s printed on. No other toxic chemical claims more lives and leaves more families without mothers, fathers, sons and daughters than asbestos. And the legislation offered by Mr. Udall and Mr. Vitter will only expose future generations to asbestos and many other highly toxic chemicals.”

Daniel Rosenberg, Senior Attorney in the Health Program at the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), said:

“This important chemical safety law needs to be updated, and the bill has improved notably since the original version introduced two years ago. But the proposal still contains rollbacks and loopholes that make it worse than current law. For example, a lax Environmental Protection Agency could use the bill to give a green light to deregulate hundreds of controversial chemicals with minimal review. The bill also would block state action even when EPA has done nothing to protect the public. The bill’s failings would be easy to remedy, and we continue to work to get this bill to a point where it would be acceptable.”

Andy Igrejas, Director of [Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families](#), said:

“Firefighters, nurses, parents of kids with learning disabilities and cancer survivors all still oppose this legislation. In its current form it would not make a big dent in the problem of toxic chemical exposure and would even do some harm by restraining state governments. While Senators Vitter and Udall have made some positive changes, the bill is not up to the important task of protecting public health. We plan to work with Senators from both parties to make the needed improvements.”

Nancy Buermeyer, Senior Policy Strategist at the [Breast Cancer Fund](#), said:

“There is an urgent need to protect Americans from the dangerous chemicals we are exposed to everyday – unfortunately this bill doesn’t hit the mark on protecting public health. Congress negotiated with our health and the American public lost out to chemical industry profits. We’re calling on senators from both sides of the aisle to support amendments that transform this bill into a robust defense for people to live free from contamination by toxic chemicals.”

Michael Green, Executive Director of the [Center for Environmental Health](#), said:

“We are terribly disappointed that this long-awaited proposal still retains provisions that put children and families at risk. The Senate bill would leave EPA unable to adequately address chemical health threats, and at the same time, undermine state actions that, in the absence of federal rules, are the only protections our children have. We expect Senators who care about children’s health to make significant changes to this dangerous approach.”

Shaney Jo Darden, Founder of [Keep a Breast Foundation](#), said:

“The Vitter-Udall bill fails to protect people, instead it protects the chemical industry. We need to demand a shift in focus from the welfare of industry to the welfare of humans. This should be an opportunity for real change, to protect people of all ages and backgrounds. Everyday we’re exposed to thousands of harmful chemicals in our environment, food supply, and body care products; each instance of exposure is negligible, but cumulatively these exposures add up and in time can lead to cancer initiation. Only 10% of cancer diagnosis is related to family history, the other 90% is environmentally related. Protect not defect.”

Sahru Keiser, Program Manager at [Breast Cancer Action](#), said:

“Fundamentally, this bill does not embrace the precautionary principle, which would require lawmakers and regulators to act on existing evidence to protect public health before harm occurs. The burden of proof still lies with us (and regulatory agencies) to prove chemicals are harmful, rather than requiring corporations to prove chemicals are safe.”

Catherine Thomasson MD, Executive Director, [Physicians for Social Responsibility](#) said:

“It’s time to put health first. The public wants their children protected from dangerous chemicals. The Udall-Vitter bill is still a step backwards. It must allow states to act to protect its citizens.”

Dorothy Felix of [Mossville Environmental Action Now \(MEAN\)](#) said:

“Because of the failure of TSCA, our community is faced with extensive toxic pollution that is causing us to consider relocating. Senator Vitter and other legislators are well aware of these toxic impacts yet they are proposing a bill that would be even worse than current law. Let’s be clear: Senator Vitter’s bill is good for the chemical industry, not for the people who live daily with the consequences of toxic chemical exposures.”

Martha Arguello, Director of [Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles](#), said:

“Chemical industry influence over the Vitter-Udall bill is unacceptable and the authors need to come back to the table and listen to the huge community of environmental and health groups that have been working on TSCA reform for decades”

Kathy Curtis, Executive Director of [Clean and Healthy New York](#), said:

“The regulatory framework for chemicals must protect health, especially the most vulnerable members of our society, and also must allow states to regulate toxic chemicals in order to protect their communities. State actions to protect their own residents are the only thing prompting federal action, and states should not lose that right.”

John Replogle, President and CEO of [Seventh Generation](#), said:

“Federal legislation should not tie the hands of states which have shown leadership in protecting their citizens, restricting the worst chemicals and ultimately driving the marketplace towards safer alternatives.”

Erin Switalski, Executive Director of Women’s Voices for the Earth, said:

“Congress can and should do better to protect us from chemicals found in everyday consumer products that cause cancer, birth defects, infertility, and a whole host of other chronic diseases. We don’t need a bill written by the chemical industry. What we need is real reform that will give the public peace of mind that the products they are bringing into their home and using on a daily basis will not harm their health. Women’s Voices for the Earth is urging senators not to sign on to the bill until some of these serious flaws are addressed.”

Mike Belliveau, Executive Director of the [Environmental Health Strategy Center](#), said:

“American families deserve to know that the products they buy are free from dangerous chemicals that threaten the health of a developing child or pregnant woman. Unfortunately, the Udall-Vitter bill strikes the wrong balance in reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act, which everyone agrees is badly broken.”

David Levine, President and CEO of the [American Sustainable Business Council](#), said:

“The Vitter-Udall bill as introduced falls short in delivering meaningful reform that benefits downstream businesses and innovative entrepreneurs. The Boxer-Markey bill goes much further. We look forward to working with the Senate to make improvements to the bills that encourage safer alternatives and promote transparency”

Kelly Vlahakis-Hanks, CEO of [Earth Friendly Products](#), said:

“Getting the worst chemicals out of commerce should be the highest priority for legislators. Meaningful reform should not impose additional roadblocks on the EPA from taking action on chemicals that are widely known to be unsafe.”

Barry Cik, Founder of [Naturepedic](#), said:

“Consumers are demanding cleaner and safer products. Legislation should make transparency of the safety information about ingredients in products readily available and easy to access”

Richard Moore of Los Jardins Institute and Environmental Health Alliance said:

“The chemical industry should not be allowed to draft the very laws meant to regulate them. We need serious chemical reform that protects the health of all people including those who are living in ‘hot spots’ or ‘sacrifice zones’ – typically communities of color -- that are highly impacted by chemical factories. It seems that my own Senator, Senator Udall, has forgotten the needs of his constituents in favor of meeting the needs of his industry friends.”

Jose Bravo, Executive Director of the [Just Transition Alliance](#), said:

“We need 21st century, solution-based laws that empower agencies and people to live in a society that safeguards our health and environment. This bill falls short of that goal. The bill is called the ‘Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act’ but unfortunately it is a horrible reminder of what industry special interests can do to undermine our personal and environmental health.”

Kathleen Schuler, Co-Director of the [Health Legacy in Minnesota](#), said:

"I'd love to say that Vitter-Udall is the ticket to reforming Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). Unfortunately, it's not. While it improves on current law in a few areas, it is worse in other areas. The glacial pace of chemical review and preemption of timely state actions to protect citizens are key weaknesses in the bill. This bill falls short of meaningful reform that truly protects public health."

Katie Huffling RN, Director of the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, said:

"New research links toxic chemicals with a range of illnesses and billions of dollars in health care costs, yet Senators Udall and Vitter are proposing a bill that doesn't address major problems with current policies and would give the chemical industry a free pass to keep exposing Americans to harmful chemicals for decades to come."