

Scott Pruitt's Toxic Agenda

EPA Administrator Pruitt's rollbacks on toxic chemicals put public health at risk

Science shows us that certain chemicals in everyday products are linked to cancer, infertility, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and other illnesses.

But Scott Pruitt isn't using the new authority EPA was given under America's primary chemical safety law, which a bipartisan majority recently strengthened, to step up oversight of toxic chemicals that threaten American communities and families. Instead, Pruitt has spent the last year undermining the "Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act," putting the health of more American children and families at risk.

The Toxic Substances Control Act

2016's Lautenberg Act was designed to strengthen America's primary chemical safety law, the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).

Before then, TSCA was broken. Tens of thousands of chemicals were permitted to remain on the market without any review of their safety, and hundreds more came on the market each year without any demonstration that they were safe. EPA also lacked sufficient authority to require companies to test their chemicals for safety.

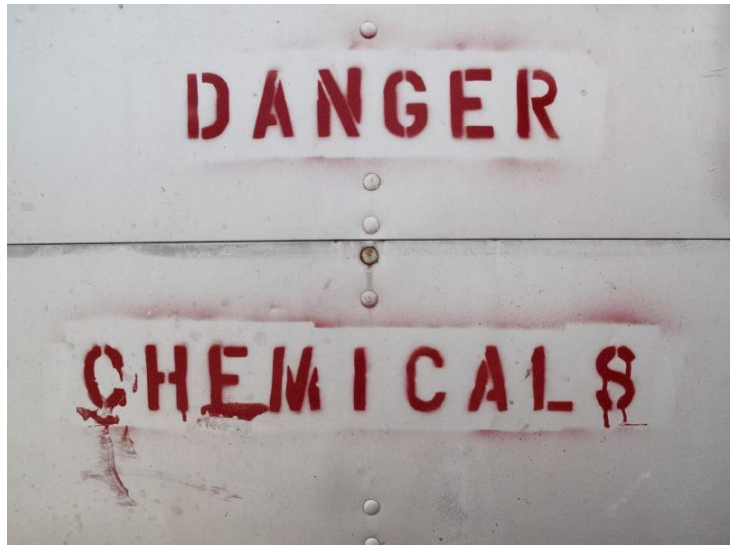
Also, companies were being given wide latitude to claim trade secrecy protections for chemical information they submitted to the government, thus hiding it from the public, as well as from state and local governments and medical professionals.

In 2016, in a remarkable show of bipartisanship, Congress stepped up for public health and finally plugged the gaping loopholes in our toxic chemical regulations.

Pruitt's toxic agenda

When the new law was passed, EPA initially worked around the clock to faithfully implement its requirements. They met statutory deadlines. They began to tackle dangerous chemicals that remained on the market despite serious health concerns.

But when Scott Pruitt took office in 2017, progress stopped.



Putting chemical industry insiders in charge:

Pruitt quickly put the new law in the hands of chemical industry insiders. First he hired Nancy Beck straight from the American Chemistry Council to reverse course on how the law was to be implemented. Then Pruitt brought chemical industry hired-gun [Michael Dourson](#) into the EPA as a consultant. (He also chose him to be the nation's top chemical safety cop, but Congress balked and Dourson had to withdraw after concern grew about his decades of work for industry to minimize concerns about toxic chemicals.) All throughout, Pruitt met frequently with chemical industry trade groups to hear their wish lists, ignored pro-environment voices, and sought to purge independent scientific experts from the EPA's advisory boards.

Ignoring Congress' intent that EPA conduct comprehensive safety reviews of chemicals:

Nancy Beck's first task was to tear up the strong proposed foundational regulations for the new law and [re-write them](#). The result: final rules that mirror the wishes of the chemical industry from which she'd just come. Under the new rules, EPA reviews of chemical safety can be so limited in scope that they can exclude known uses of, and exposures to, toxic chemicals. The new reviews can also ignore "legacy uses" of toxic chemicals like asbestos and flame retardants that cause cancer or can lower children's IQs. In fact, the rules deviate from the law so radically that they are being [challenged in court](#).

Undermining good science:

Pruitt has threatened drastic cuts to the [IRIS program](#) that provides science on chemicals across the agency and to state and local governments. He also [issued a directive](#) to remove independent expert scientists from EPA advisory panels in lieu of conflicted industry scientists.

Shelving protections from toxic chemicals:

In December 2017, Pruitt's EPA shelved proposed bans of high-risk uses of three toxic chemicals, [trichloroethylene \(TCE\)](#), [N-methylpyrrolidone \(NMP\)](#) and [methylene chloride \(DCM\)](#). TCE is a known carcinogen, NMP can harm developing children, and DCM is so dangerous when used in paint strippers that it is responsible for dozens of deaths.

Illegally green-lighting new chemicals:

While the update to TSCA was meant to ensure better oversight of chemicals before they are allowed on the market, Pruitt's EPA has worked to [flout the law](#) — reversing early implementation efforts to now allow chemicals to come onto the market with scant oversight or public disclosure.

Keeping secrets for the industry:

Despite the law's requirements and EPA's own rules requiring disclosure of health information on new chemicals, EPA has been allowing companies to continue [keeping this information secret](#) from the public.

When Pruitt appeared before the Senate at a January 2018 hearing, he ducked questions on his record of toxic chemical safety. Many Senators expressed concerns that Pruitt was failing to use the authority Congress had just given his agency to improve chemical safety — and that the EPA was ignoring the high risks of certain chemicals EPA had already identified as well as "legacy" chemicals such as asbestos that remain in use.