



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment

## eNewsletter -- September 2008



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Dear CHE Partners:

What is public health and why don't people understand its importance?

The American Public Health Association and other health groups have struggled with that question for a decade.

"Americans don't quite make the link between public health and water that's safe to drink, air that's safe to breathe, and food that's safe to eat," says APHA Executive Director Georges C. Benjamin in the September issue of APHA's *The Nation's Health*. The publication's lead article is dedicated to why public health advocates have failed to achieve effective critical mass promoting the absolutely critical mission of protecting human health and the environment that supports us all.

Why Americans don't care more about public health is a fundamental, one could even say profound question. It is a question that seems made to order for CHE dialogue and exploration. Why haven't we succeeded in convincing Americans that clean water, clean air and safe food really matter? Why have we failed to make public health a powerful and effective national and international brand?

Trust for America's Health is a Founding CHE Partner that has thought deeply about public health issues. TFAH writes:

A new survey commissioned by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) finds that Americans place a high value on preventing disease and promoting healthy lifestyles. At a time when the rising costs of health care has become the central economic issue, Americans are eager to invest in preventing diseases and promoting healthy lifestyles as a way of helping to reduce long term health care costs in the country.

TFAH has obviously found ways of framing public health issues for Americans that elicit these positive responses. And yet those responses have yet to "go to scale" with widely recognized branded concern in the same way climate change, for example, has.

Public health frames depend on cultural values. Ted Schettler recommends a remarkable website on the World Values Survey. (See <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.) The site is extraordinarily interesting as we think about the different dilemmas that public health poses depending on cultural context or frame.

We would like very much to hear from CHE Partners about why have we failed to energize Americans about public health. What should we do and what are the critical obstacles we

face in helping Americans -- and people everywhere -- understand how fundamental public health is? We welcome your thoughts. And thank you for being a CHE Partner and committed to our values of science and civility.

Michael Lerner  
Founding CHE Partner

## CHE Partnership and Working Group Calls

### **From Lab to Law: The Phthalates Ban, the Precautionary Principle, and How New Science Becomes New Policy**

**Thursday, Sept. 25, 2008 at 9 AM Pacific / Noon PM Eastern**

In late July, lawmakers in the United States passed the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, which includes provisions banning three types of phthalates (plastics softeners) and temporarily banning three other types from certain children's products. The ban is based on limited data suggesting that phthalates act as endocrine disruptors. The CPSI Act, as well as the 2007 European REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals) legislation, are landmark examples of a precautionary, rather than reactionary, approach to public health.

How do REACH and the phthalates ban fit into a larger movement toward the precautionary approach? What constitutes "proof of harm" in light of emerging knowledge about the complexity of disease causation? **Just how does new science become new policy?** Join us on Thursday, Sep 25, at 9 AM Pacific/ Noon Eastern for a special CHE Policy Education Call exploring these important and timely questions.

The call will be moderated by Steve Heilig, MPH, Director of Public Health and Education at the San Francisco Medical Society. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

Featured speakers will include:

- **Janet Nudelman**, Director of Program and Policy at the Breast Cancer Fund
- **Dr. Ted Schettler**, Science Director at the Science & Environmental Health Network
- **Lisette van Vliet**, Toxics Policy Advisor at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm

#### **RSVP for From Lab to Law**

Resources related to this call

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#### **Resources from recent CHE calls**

If you missed any of the following CHE calls, you may listen to MP3 recordings and find supporting materials at the following links:

- September 4, 2008 - "[The Future of Cancer: Primary Prevention, the President's Cancer Panel, and the New CHE Cancer Consensus Statement](#)"
- July 15, 2008 - "[Table Matters: How Industrial Animal Production Impacts Health and the Environment](#)"
- July 1, 2008 - "[Self Defense: Environmental Impacts on Autoimmune Diseases](#)"

And of course, you can always explore our [archived resources](#) from past Partnership calls.

## **Tools Announcements and Resources**

**TOOLS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RESOURCES**

--Call for Papers--

**Advancing Climate Justice: Transforming the Economy, Public Health & Our Environment**

**Deadline: October 6, 2008**

Conference to be held Jan 29-30, 2009 at Fordham Law School's Pope Auditorium in New York City.

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, along with cosponsors Fordham Law School Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NIEHS Center for Environmental Health in Northern Manhattan, and the New York University Law School's Environmental Law Society; announce an international call for abstracts of papers to be presented at our 20th Anniversary Conference: Advancing Climate Justice: Transforming the Economy, Public Health & Our Environment on January 29-30, 2009 at Fordham Law School's Pope Auditorium in New York City. Abstract submissions are invited for reports and papers to be published in the conference primer. Submissions can include work that is unpublished and original work that has been previously published.

Research can be submitted on any of the following broad topics:

- Climate justice and economics
- Climate justice and public health
- Climate justice case studies
- Any combination thereof

Abstracts can be submitted through our abstract submission website:

<http://www.weact.org/conference>, by email to [ogonnaya@weact.org](mailto:ogonnaya@weact.org), by fax at 212-961-1015, or by U.S. mail to:

Scientific Advisory Group - Abstract Review Committee  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
271 W. 125th Street  
Suite 308  
New York, NY 10027

Authors are strongly encouraged to use the on-line submission form. All abstracts will receive an electronic receipt upon arrival. If a receipt fails to follow submission, abstracts should be re-submitted. Authors will be notified of acceptance by October 20, 2008 via email.

For further information, please feel free to contact Ogonnaya Dotson-Newman via phone at 212-961-1000 ext. 315 or email at [ogonnaya@weact.org](mailto:ogonnaya@weact.org)

**September Environmental Health Science News**

Articles gleaned from [Environmental Health News](#)

**States battle pesticides in groundwater**

Should we be worried about pesticides in groundwater contaminating the water we drink and the food we eat?

ABC News  
Sep 10, 2008

**Pollution 'hinders heart pacing'**

Air pollution from traffic hinders the heart's ability to conduct electrical signals, a study has suggested.

BBC, United Kingdom  
Sep 10, 2008

Allergies to worsen with global warming

Warmer temperatures and more carbon monoxide are causing allergenic weeds to be more abundant and produce more pollen, according to the study.  
Denver CBS4 TV, Colorado  
Sep 10, 2008

That plastic baby bottle

What do you do when one arm of the government says everything is O.K. and another tells you to watch out? That is what is happening with bisphenol-A - a chemical used in plastics that is found in baby bottles and liners for canned goods. When in doubt, especially when it comes to children, err on the side of caution.  
New York Times  
Sep 6, 2008

Deal would allow state oversight of chemicals in California

An ambitious proposal crafted in the dwindling days of the legislative session would for the first time give state regulators broad authority to oversee chemicals in consumer products.  
Sacramento Bee, California  
Aug 25, 2008

The journey to safe chemicals

The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 was signed last Thursday morning by President Bush. It marks America's most important regulatory advance against toxic chemicals in many years.  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pennsylvania  
Aug 20, 2008

Calling all chemists

Our collective fate will come down to our ability to shift the way we produce and consume electricity and fuels and the way we design and use chemicals and the materials made from them. This task will require thousands of innovations.  
Chemical & Engineering News  
Aug 18, 2008

Progress against toxins in toys takes small steps

When a nationwide ban on hormone-disrupting chemicals in soft plastic toys and cosmetics takes effect early next year, it will mark an important turning point in efforts to remove toxic compounds from consumer products.  
Chicago Tribune, Illinois  
Aug 17, 2008

**New Partners**

We welcome the many new CHE Partners who have joined since the August newsletter. To see the list of new CHE Partners and the growing list of all CHE Partners, please visit <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/base/partners-recent>.

Thank you for taking the time to read the latest about CHE. As always, we welcome your questions and suggestions. Please direct comments to Eleni Sotos, CHE Program Director, at [Eleni@HealthandEnvironment.org](mailto:Eleni@HealthandEnvironment.org).

Best wishes,

Eleni Sotos, MA, Program Director  
Shelby Gonzalez, Administrative Coordinator  
Julia Varshavsky, Program Associate

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