

# 9/11 ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

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September 24, 2003

The Honorable Dennis Hastert  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Speaker Hastert:

9/11 Environmental Action was formed by people who live, work and send their children to school in lower Manhattan, as well as environmental and worker safety experts and groups. We came together in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks to press the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to carry out a comprehensive cleanup of all buildings contaminated by WTC pollution.

We are writing to request that the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives hold hearings in response to our concern regarding the safety of indoor and ambient air quality in lower Manhattan in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center.

We call upon you to conduct an investigation into the findings of the report issued by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Inspector General (OIG), which revealed that the White House Council on Environmental Quality had pressured the Environmental Protection Agency to downplay risks to public health and to delete precautionary advice.

These hearings are important for several reasons:

First, we are deeply concerned that information critical to the health of New Yorkers and rescue workers alike was suppressed. Instead of being told the truth, we were repeatedly assured that the air was safe. As a result, first responders worked without respirators, and many of us returned prematurely to the area and reoccupied our workplaces and homes, and sent our children back to schools, that had been contaminated. The people of our city and of our nation are entitled to know why and how we came to be misled by the very agency charged with protecting our health.

Second, and more pressing, the EPA OIG Report has called into question the efficacy of the EPA's Residential Cleaning and Testing program. Moreover, noting serious flaws in EPA's testing and cleanup protocols, and the failure of EPA to provide a workplace

cleanup, the OIG Report concedes that many buildings around Ground Zero and beyond may still be contaminated. If that is the case, then exposures and the potential for new illnesses to develop, especially among children, are ongoing. Congressional hearings would be the best forum for a much-needed re-examination of the issue of lingering indoorcontamination.

Finally, the hearings should also study the preparedness of the federal government with respect to dealing with environmental disasters, so that for future situations factual and timely public health information is shared with those most affected--emergency responders, residents and workers, and so that proper corrective action is taken.

The U.S. Congress is the most appropriate body to fully investigate the federal government's response in the days following September 11th. The people of NewYork City must have the security of knowing that their homes, schools and workplaces are safe.

We look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Flynn  
Steering Committee, 9/11 Environmental Action

CC: Hillary Rodham Clinton  
United States Senate

Jerrold Nadler  
United States House of Representatives