

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

To Discussion Leaders:

It's time to build a Healthy Legacy!

The American public has a heightened concern for regulatory failures right now. We could seize that opportunity to frame our discussion of healthy legacy issues in terms of regulatory standards that should be adopted by the legislative bodies locally and nationally.

The LWV Mpls Healthy Legacy committee, working together with the Healthy Legacy coalition of Minnesota, initiated the Healthy Legacy Forum on March 5th, the follow-up discussion at Children's Hospital on March 6th, and these Unit discussions to educate Minneapolis citizens about the need to provide a Healthy Legacy for all citizens, especially children, and strategies to address that need. The committee has identified a number of important documents and online resources relative to toxic chemicals that threaten children's health. Those documents and resources are available on the LWVMpls website at <http://www.lwvmpls.org> as pdf files and website links. Please refer to the February and March issues of the Minneapolis Voter for background information.

**Discussion:** The purpose of this discussion is to take action toward a Healthy Legacy for our children. Those who have heard the Forum presentations or read the LWVMpls website materials on Healthy Legacy will be valuable assets to the discussion leaders.

### **The Problem:**

***In our environment - in the air, the soil, the water - and in products produced globally and locally, there is strong evidence of toxic chemicals of high concern. What are the problems that have been tied to toxic chemicals?***

As a group, pull out the facts from the information in this guide and the web resources that can be used in making the case for legislative action.

### **Making the Case for Legislative Action**

*What did you hear at the Forum that you would want the legislature to hear?*

As a group, brainstorm the body of knowledge you share. Create a list of many possible arguments that could be made to the legislators.

## **Background Information**

### **1. Definition of Sustainability**

Sustainability has become a complex term that can be applied to almost every facet of life on Earth, particularly the many different levels of biological organization, such as; wetlands, prairies and forests and is expressed in human organization concepts, such as; eco-villages, eco-municipalities, sustainable cities, and human activities and disciplines, such as sustainable agriculture, sustainable architecture and renewable energy.

For humans to live sustainably, the Earth's resources must be used at a rate at which they can be replenished. However, there is now clear scientific evidence that humanity is living unsustainably, and that an unprecedented collective effort is needed to return human use of natural resources to within sustainable limits.

Since the 1980s, the idea of human sustainability has become increasingly associated with the integration of economic, social and environmental spheres. In 1989, the United Nations Brundtland Commission articulated what has now become a widely accepted definition of sustainability: “[to meet] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (wikipedia)

## **2. The Minneapolis Office of Sustainability** <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/>

The Office of Sustainability for the City of Minneapolis is located in City Hall. Gayle Prest is the Coordinator of their efforts and she reports to Mayor R.T.Rybak and the City Council. Minneapolisians attending the Forum learned about the report from the Sustainability Office and its account of the City's work on 24 health, environmental, and community indicators. The focus of the March 5th Forum was the Health Indicators of sustainability.

The City Council adopted an Environmental Purchasing Policy that regulates cleaning products used in Public Buildings. There are efforts in the Minneapolis Public Schools and districts across the state to have toxic free cleaning products. Councilmen Scott Benson and Cam Gordon were authors of this policy. Go to the website listed above for the Minneapolis Office of Sustainability to see the Health Indicators in the 2008 report and read the Environmental Purchasing Policy, authored by Councilmen Scott Benson and Cam Gordon.

## **3. The Healthy Legacy coalition** <http://www.healthylegacy.org>

Healthy Legacy is the name of the organization founded by Clean Water Action and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade (IATP) Policy. The Healthy Legacy coalition, situated in the IATP building in Minneapolis, was linked with the city's sustainability efforts in The Forum. Founded by Mark Ritchie, currently Secretary of State, IATP has the mission to bring together the science community's ongoing research for sustainability.

Healthy Legacy is a public health coalition representing over one million Minnesotans who are dedicated to safe products, made safely. Fourteen states are forming similar coalitions and taking the lead: AK, CA, CT, IL, MA, ME, MI, MN, NJ, NY, WA, WI, VT.

## **4. Legislative action**

Last year in the legislative session the Healthy Legacy Coalition helped sponsor two bills regarding toxic chemicals in children's products. The two bills authored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Minneapolis) and Sen. Sandra Rummel (DFL-White Bear Lake) were 1) for elimination of BPA and phthalates in plastics products such as water bottles, sippy cups, baby bottles, toys, etc. and 2) To eliminate deca, a fire retardant in clothes, furniture, mattresses, etc. The bills were combined and BPA language was dropped, and the resulting bill, supported by the advocacy of the Coalition, passed both houses. The Governor vetoed the bill, much to disappointment of all the hopeful advocates for the bill.

Rep. Karen Clark has been a tireless advocate for the environment. Clark established the Women's Environmental Institute. In her Phillips neighborhood, there is arsenic in the soil and millions of dollars have been spent in removing arsenic contaminated soil in her primarily low-income neighborhoods. She represents a part of Minneapolis where there is the highest incidence of asthma.

Many other elected leaders serving Minneapolis have advocated for the environment. Congressman Keith Ellison was heavily involved in environmental issues as state representative. Today he is a voice for sustainability at the national level.

Last year when the Phthalate and Deca bills were vetoed in Minnesota, Sen. Amy Klobuchar authored a bill at the national level to eliminate lead and phthalates and other toxic chemicals in children's products. Inspired by the child who died in Minneapolis because he swallowed a lead ring that was so toxic, Sen. Klobuchar skillfully championed the bill to ban lead in children's toys. The two press releases about that bill are posted on the website.

Klobuchar's bill was passed by congress and signed by President Bush. The bill recently went into affect. There are many articles about toy manufacturers and distributors all needing to work out the details of the new regulations. Some companies, including Wal-Mart and Babies R Us, have already changed their practices, purchasing safe BPA-free and Phthalate-free products. At Babies R Us, the employees are informed about these products. Target has yet to be persuaded.

This legislative session two bills are being offered, Toxic Free Kids Act and the BPA-free Baby Products Bills. In addition, the Deca bill that passed both houses last session before the Governor vetoed it is being reintroduced. Hopes are high for the Governor's support of all the bills.

- \* BPA bill language - HF326, Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) and SF247, Sen Sandra Rummel (DFL-White Bear Lake)
- \* BPA-free Baby Products, a fact sheet describing the BPA-free Baby Products bill and the reasons for it.
- \* Toxic Free Kids Act - a fact sheet about the Toxic free kids act and reasoning behind the bill
- \* Toxic Free Kids Act bill language - HF250, Rep Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton) and SF225, Sen Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park)
- \* Deca bill language – HF607, Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) Polybrominated diphenyl ether manufacture and sale restricted, and multistate clearinghouse participation authorized.
- \* Taking Action – Ten Meaningful Ways to Protect Children's Health contains steps to take to promote these bills and use your power as a consumer to change retail and manufacturing policy.

The Healthy Legacy Bills are heard in the House Health and Human Services Committee chaired by Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Minneapolis). He has introduced a bill, HF0458 and SF618 Kathy Saltzman (DFL-Woodbury) regarding regulating toxic chemicals. Their bill creates an advisory council on development and regulation of consumer products; establishing a comprehensive framework for consumer products that protect, support, and enhance human health, the

environment, and economic development, providing appointments; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes.

For the LWVMpls Healthy Legacy Forum a social science/science panel and a legislative panel were formed. Councilman Scott Benson, Rep. Karen Clark, and Paul Thissen were all invited participants on the panel along with Speaker of the House, Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Sen. Patricia Torres Ray.

## **5. Health issues**

The Forum brought together leaders from the City of Minneapolis, Healthy Legacy, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Minnesota, and a national leader in the Precautionary Principle, and elected leaders who must safeguard children and future generations from toxic chemicals.

Toxic Inaction, an article in the October 2007 edition of Harper's Magazine, by Mark Schapiro, editor of the Center for Investigative Reporting, describes the flaws in current U.S. regulatory policy for toxic chemicals in products that lead to poisonous unregulated chemicals ending up in our blood. The nascent science of biomonitoring has revealed dangerous chemicals making their way into the blood of Americans. The article effectively explains the biomonitoring in science that measures the levels, even minute amounts, of toxic chemicals in blood. The body burden is the accumulation of toxic chemicals in the blood over time.

Thousands of chemicals have been allowed to stay in the market without testing or review, and are found in clothes, food packaging, cosmetics, toys, and electronics, ultimately lodging in the human body. Schapiro frames the case for a better public policy. In recent years the U.S. has opposed a multitude of environmental and human rights initiatives that have gained international legitimacy without U.S. participation. Now there are many toxic chemicals prohibited in these countries but exported to others. See Toxic Inaction at [www.lwvmpls.org](http://www.lwvmpls.org).

The medical effects of toxic chemicals are well documented in the power point Healthy Minds, Healthy Lives produced by Kathleen Schuler. She is The Senior Policy Analyst in the Food and Health Program. Schuler, MPH, advocates for policies that protect human health and the environment from the toxic chemicals that contaminate our food system and our bodies. She is also Co-Director of Healthy Legacy, a Minnesota-based campaign that advocates for public policies and business practices that focus on safer products and safer production methods. Kathleen, with a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Minnesota, led numerous health policy initiatives within the Minnesota Department of Human Services. As a Bush Leadership Fellow in environmental health, she studied at Boston University and worked with the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, where she wrote "Child Proofing Our Communities-Reducing Children's Environmental Risks."

Kathleen Schuler presented her PowerPoint Healthy Children Healthy Minds to LWVMpls Unit 53 in December 2008. She has a strong case for the linking of toxic chemicals and their causing disabilities, and life long health problems. That presentation, Healthy Lives, Healthy Minds, is available in the annotated resource list for Healthy Legacy at [www.lwvmpls.org](http://www.lwvmpls.org).

Hundreds of unwanted synthetic chemicals are in our everyday consumer products and are ending up in our bodies. They pass from mother to baby and are found in umbilical cord blood, as well as breast milk. They build up with the potential for long-term health impacts. In small amounts these toxic chemicals have been shown to disrupt the normal development of children by interfering with their endocrine systems, and thereby may contribute to learning disabilities and other harmful outcomes for children. Our children are experiencing an increased incidence of chronic illness and disability. An estimated 17% of children have learning, developmental or behavioral disabilities, making them candidates for special education. Nationwide, between 1977 and 1994, students requiring special education programs increased by 191 percent. It costs twice as much to educate a student in the special education program. Kathleen Schuler's presentation "Healthy Lives, Healthy Minds" presents sobering information on developmental consequences of toxic chemicals. "The Price of Pollution: Executive summary" quantifies the story of Cost Estimates of Environment – Related Childhood Disease in Minnesota.

## **6. Legal Issues**

Carolyn Raffensperger is a lawyer, author of the Harvard article named here, and long time advocate for sustainability and the study of science and environmental health. She is an advocate for providing environmental rights in the Constitution. She gives a framework for the question asked in the Forum: How can Government Safeguard Our Children and Future Generations? Her paper "Models for Protecting the Environment for Future Generations" was published in October 2008 by the Science and Environmental Health Network and The International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School (<http://www.sehn.org>) or (<http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/hrp>). "Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging" is a major report released on October 23, 2008, by Science and Environmental Health Network, in conjunction with Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility (<http://www.agehealthy.org>).

### **Ten steps you can take to get involved with these issues**

Alert members to bring their cell phone to the meeting. Bring the attached phone and mail directory to the meeting. Talk about the suggestions below as you write a personal message to your legislators.

1. Call your state and federal elected officials.
  2. Get involved with Healthy Legacy
  3. Write a letter to your local newspaper
  4. Tell your friends and family
  5. Ask questions at your local retailer
  6. Call the manufacturers of unsafe products
  7. Become a savvy shopper
  8. Talk to your local schools about creating a safe learning environment
  9. Host a Healthy Home Party
  - 10 Call your elected officials again.
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