



U.S. Senator Elizabeth Dole

United States Senate ♦ Washington, DC 20510

News Release

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Senate Committee Approves Dole Bill to Protect Against TCE Contamination

Washington, D.C. – The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works today approved a bill sponsored by U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole to help protect our most susceptible populations, such as pregnant women, infants and children, against the negative health impacts of drinking water contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), a chemical commonly used in degreasing agents, paint and spot removers and adhesives.

“TCE is the most widespread industrial water contaminant in America,” said Dole. “It can be found in every state, including in the groundwater at 87 percent of our military installations. This legislation will put standards in place to help ensure that families are protected from this dangerous chemical.”

The legislation, which Dole introduced with Sen. Hillary Clinton, would require the Environmental Protection Agency to establish a health advisory for TCE and a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation, which is a legally enforceable public water system standard, to limit TCE levels. The bill also would require EPA to prepare an Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) inhalation reference concentration (RfC) for TCE vapor exposure. IRIS is an electronic database containing information on human health effects that may result from exposure to various chemicals in the environment, and an RfC would provide an estimate of how much TCE vapor exposure would create an appreciable risk for harmful effects.

Dole's bill received broad, bipartisan support in the Committee vote, with only one member opposing it.

Background

Government estimates show that over three decades (1958-1987), as many as 1 million people living and working at Camp Lejeune, N.C. may have been exposed to drinking water contaminated with TCE, among other chemicals. The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has found that babies exposed in utero to the drinking water developed leukemia and other cancers, as well as birth defects, such as spina bifida and cleft palate.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Dole has fought to help bring forward the facts about the Camp Lejeune water contamination and to expedite the notification of potential victims. The defense authorization bill for fiscal year 2008 included Dole's amendment that requires the Secretary of the Navy to identify and directly notify former and retired Marines, their families and civilian employees who lived and worked at Camp Lejeune of their possible exposure to the contaminated drinking water.

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