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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed S. 3149, the "Toxic Substances Control Act." I believe this legislation may be one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation that has been enacted by the Congress.

This toxic substances control legislation provides broad authority to regulate any of the tens of thousands of chemicals in commerce. Only a few of these chemicals have been tested for their long-term effects on human health or the environment. Through the testing and reporting requirements of the law, our understanding of these chemicals should be greatly enhanced. If a chemical is found to present a danger to health or the environment, appropriate regulatory action can be taken before it is too late to undo the damage.

The legislation provides that the Federal Government through the Environmental Protection Agency may require the testing of selected new chemicals prior to their production to determine if they will pose a risk to health or the environment. Manufacturers of all selected new chemicals will be required to notify the Agency at least 90 days before commencing commercial production. The Agency may promulgate regulations or go into court to restrict the production or use of a chemical or to even ban it if such drastic action is necessary.

The bill closes a gap in our current array of laws to protect the health of our people and the environment. The Clean Air Act and the Water Pollution Control Act protect the air and water from toxic contaminants. The Food and Drug Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act are used to protect the food we eat and the water we drink against hazardous contaminants. Other provisions of existing laws protect the health and the environment against other polluting contaminants such as pesticides and radiation. However, none of the existing statutes provide comprehensive protection.

This bill provides broad discretionary authority to protect the health and environment. It is critical, however, that the legislation be administered in a manner so as not to duplicate existing regulatory and enforcement authorities.

In addition, I am certain that the Environmental Protection Agency realizes that it must carefully exercise its discretionary authority so as to minimize the regulatory burden consistent with the effective protection of the health and environment.

The Administration, the majority and minority members of the Congress, the chemical industry, labor, consumer, environmental and other groups all have contributed to the bill as it has finally been enacted. It is a strong bill and will be administered in a way which focuses on the most critical environmental problems not covered by existing legislation while not overburdening either the regulatory agency, the regulated industry, or the American people.

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