

**Testimony of John S. Bresland
Nominated by President Bush to be a Board Member and Chairman of the
U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board**

**Before the Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, DC
October 2, 2007**

Thank you, Chairman Boxer and distinguished members of the committee.

My name is John Bresland. I am honored to appear before you to describe my background and to express my strong commitment to carrying on the important, live-saving work of the Chemical Safety Board.

With me this morning is my wife, Beth, who is an Oncology Social Worker at Sibley Memorial Hospital.

It is an honor to have Senator Lautenberg present at the hearing this morning. Senator, we all salute your extraordinary leadership on the issue of chemical safety and your role in establishing the CSB in 1990.

In 2002, the Senate confirmed me as a CSB Board member. During my five-year term I had the privilege of working with Carolyn Merritt, the Board Chairman, whose five year ended in August. Carolyn did an exceptional job and I congratulate her. Through her efforts and the hard work of the Board members and staff the productivity and the prominence of the Chemical Safety Board increased dramatically. The CSB is now known around the world as the preeminent independent agency investigating accidents in chemical plants and oil refineries. I am convinced that as a result of our investigations and safety recommendations lives have been saved and communities have been protected. I am proud to have been a part of Carolyn's legacy, and would hope to continue it and build on it should I be confirmed.

I believe that my 35 years of experience in the chemical industry and 5 years at the CSB make me uniquely qualified to serve as the next chairman. During my career in industry I served in high management positions involving responsibility for worker safety and the environment – including as a chemical plant general manager and as a corporate director of risk management for Honeywell.

I am totally committed to the mission of the CSB – to save the lives of workers and to protect the public by conducting truly independent investigations that pull no punches in getting to the root causes of tragic industrial chemical accidents.

In my five years on the Board I have strongly supported our investigations staff in producing fair but thorough and tough accident reports with appropriate recommendations to companies, trade associations and government agencies such as EPA and OSHA. As an active board member, I traveled to many accident sites with the investigation teams to represent the agency and to see first hand what had happened.

I believe that the CSB's accident investigations - which are independent of any company, industry, or government influence - can bring to light serious problems that, when corrected, will save lives and reduce worker injuries. I have given more than 100 speeches and presentations on the CSB's work to industry groups, labor gatherings, and other stakeholders, and my message is always: you must be committed to safety 100% of the time. Accident prevention is the moral thing to do. It is also the only rational business model, because chemical plant explosions and fires are so destructive and result in severe economic consequences. Businesses must be good stewards of their workers and good neighbors in their communities.

My goals for the CSB include:

- First, continuing to conduct tough, independent investigations of chemical accidents
- Second, increasing the size and expertise of our investigative staff;
- Third, broadening our outreach, especially to smaller businesses and to the emergency preparedness and response communities.

Finally, I fully support the testimony of Chairman Merritt before this Committee in July, where she called for improvements to the CSB authorizing statute which would strengthen and clarify the Board's investigative authority. These changes are needed to assure the continued quality and speed of the Board's investigations. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Committee on these issues.

In conclusion, it has been a privilege for me to serve on the Chemical Safety Board and to have worked with the talented and dedicated people at the CSB. As a first generation American who had the opportunity to come to the United States in my 20s and who became a citizen in 1982, I am deeply honored to have been nominated by the president to serve as Chairman of the Board.

I offer you my integrity, my judgment, and my experience.

If confirmed, I commit to work tirelessly to improve the safety of the chemical processing and oil refining industry in the United States. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

