

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 26, 2011

Dr. Paul Anastas
Assistant Administrator, Office of Research and Development
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Dr. Anastas:

We are writing to express our concern with EPA's persistence in moving forward with Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) risk assessments despite serious flaws in the process. As you are aware, numerous deficiencies have been clearly identified in our previous letters and outlined in multiple reports completed by the National Academies of Science (NAS) and the National Research Council.

While we appreciate EPA's work to address some of the inadequacies in the IRIS process, the agency has not gone far enough and many of the most serious concerns remain. To be clear, we do not think the agency should be proceeding with controversial IRIS assessments at this time. EPA regards these assessments as "critical" and "a scientific foundation for decisions," yet the NAS has identified recurring methodological problems. The Government Accountability Office has no more favorable a view of the program as it has labeled the program "at serious risk of becoming obsolete."

We also find it extremely inconsistent for you to testify before the House Science Committee that you recognize there are serious deficiencies in the program, further testify that you are working to address those deficiencies, and then turn around and state publicly that you will issue IRIS assessments despite and before correcting those deficiencies. To do so would be doing science a disfavor. In fact, you were warned on June 30th of this year by Thomas Burke, associate dean of The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health that the situation borders on a "crisis." Burke further stated "the sleeping giant is that EPA science is on the rocks . . . if you fail, you become irrelevant."

We are reiterating our May 10, 2011 request that you suspend the IRIS review process for all current reviews where serious concerns have been raised. Although EPA has endeavored to

expedite the finalizing of IRIS assessments, we feel that ensuring scientific reviews are done properly and using the best available science is paramount. EPA has yet to make the necessary improvements to the IRIS process to make certain that will happen.

We would appreciate a thorough response detailing how EPA concludes it can move forward with IRIS risk assessments based on sound and transparent science without first implementing the myriad of recommendations it has received and fully addressing remaining flaws in the process.

Sincerely,

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David Vitter
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James M. Inhofe', with a horizontal line underneath.

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

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