Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 31, 2012

Dr. Linda Birnbaum
Director
National Toxicology Program
P.O. Box 12233, Mail Drop B2-01
Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709

Dr. Paul Anastas
Assistant Administrator
Office of Research and Development
Mail Drop: D343-04
109 Alexander Drive
Durham, NC 27711

Dear Director Birnbaum and Dr. Anastas:

We write to request the release of the joint U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Pathology Working Group's (PWG) report on research conducted by the Ramazzini Institute in Italy.

In 2010, EPA "halted progress on four pending draft assessments that contained data from the Ramazzini Institute -- including those of methanol, the fuel additives methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) and ethyl tert-butyl ether (ETBE), and the plastic ingredient acrylonitrile -- as well as existing assessments of vinyl chloride and 1,1 dichloroethylene (DCE)."[1] EPA's actions were based on questions raised by an NTP review of "results and methods of Ramazzini's studies on methanol's carcinogenicity."[2] An EPA press release last year announcing the PWG stated that the review would take months and specifically, that the "results will be made public."[3] Yet, we are compelled to write today amidst media reports indicating that while the report was finalized, "Anastas wants to meet with Birnbaum to agree on the interpretation before it is released."[4]

Moreover, EPA's denial of a staff request for a copy of the report has required us to express our frustration with your withholding of important scientific information related to chemical assessments. During this past year, both the National Academy of Sciences (NAS),

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[1] Maria Hegstad, "Agencies Slated to Soon Release Study on Controversial Italian Cancer Data," InsideEPA.com, January 25, 2012, available at: http://insideepa.com/201201252388232/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/agencies-slated-to-soon-release-study-on-controversial-italian-cancer-data/menu-id-95.html (hereinafter Hegstad article)

[2] Ibid.

[3] EPA Press Release, "EPA Announces Plan of Action to Address Four IRIS Assessments," April 11, 2011, available at: http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/48f0fa7dd51f9e9885257359003f5342/f88161843dbdd2a98525786f005b734b!OpenDocument

[4] Hegstad article, *supra*, note 1

and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), have reported significant concerns with the IRIS program. This has led to bipartisan letters of concern to both of your agencies, as well as the FY 2012 appropriations conference report language directing your agencies to contract with the NAS to conduct additional reviews of the quality of work at NTP and EPA.

It is our understanding that EPA and NTP received the PWG report last November. While your respective agencies continue to deliberate over your interpretation of the PWG report, we request that you provide a copy so that we may review the PWG's findings.

Accordingly, we request a complete and unredacted copy of the PWG report on the Ramazzini Institute, as well as the following:

1. A summary of the weight of evidence placed on the Ramazzini Institute's work in IRIS' assessment for reference doses of methanol.

2. An update on the status of EPA's position on whether to accept recent peer review of the non-cancer effects of methanol.

3. A list of all chemical assessments that include, or may include in the future, work performed at the Ramazzini Institute.

Further, pending a complete analysis of the work performed at the Ramazzini Institute, we urge you to carefully consider all assessments currently under review that incorporate studies from the Ramazzini Institute. In light of the readily available nature of the information we are requesting, we look forward to your response by February 7, 2012.

Sincerely,

David Vitter
United States Senate

Rep. Paul Broun, MD
Chairman
House Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight

James Inhofe
United States Senate

Rep. Andy Harris, MD
Chairman
House Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Energy & Environment