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February 25, 2008

Dr. Julie Louise Gerberding
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dr. Howard Frumkin
Director, National Center for Environmental Health/
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
1825 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Dear Drs. Gerberding and Frumkin,

I am writing to urge release of the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) report, titled, "Public Health Implications of Hazardous Substances in the Twenty-Six U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern." The report uses publicly available information to compare toxic contaminants and releases in the Great Lakes region with health indicators in the same area. The report finds that, of the 100 hazardous sites surveyed, 29 pose "public health hazards" and two pose "urgent public health hazards."

As you know, ATSDR staff began preparing the Great Lakes study in 2002 and completed an initial draft in 2004. Since the draft's completion, the report has been reviewed both internally and by external peer reviewers. The final report was approved for release in July, 2007, but was pulled by senior ATSDR officials before it was made public.

Since ATSDR delayed the report's release, the press has seized on the specter of political impropriety. A recent article in the Washington Post, "Delay of Report is Blamed on Politics"¹ suggested that ATSDR's suppression of the report resulted from political interference in scientific research. An editorial from my home-state of Wisconsin was

¹ "Delay of Report Is Blamed on Politics," The Washington Post, February 18, 2008.

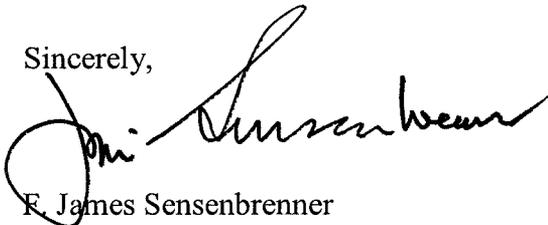
more forceful, writing “How many health-related deaths will eventually be traced back to these stone age Bush administration policies?”²

The allegations of political machinations are unfounded. As Ranking Member of the House Science and Technology Committee’s Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, I have been involved in the Subcommittee’s investigation from its onset. To date, I have not seen any evidence that the decision to delay the report’s release was politically motivated. Instead, our investigation suggests that senior officials were concerned about flaws in the study’s methodology.

While I appreciate these concerns, and regret that they were not corrected during the study’s extensive review period, the report has generated enough public attention that the public has a right to examine it. It is my understanding that, while the presentation of the data is potentially misleading, the data itself is accurate. The public should therefore be trusted to review that data and reach its own conclusions.

The report’s conclusions have already reached the public. The public should have the benefit of the analysis as well. I understand that you have asked the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies to review the report. Upon receipt of their comments, the report should be released with any necessary caveats. If you have any questions, please contact Subcommittee Staff, Bart Forsyth, at (202) 225-6470 or Tom Hammond at (202) 226-2177.

Sincerely,



F. James Sensenbrenner
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

CC: BRAD MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight