

# Earth Day Losing Its Credibility

*By ACSH Staff — April 22, 2010*

Today marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. But a movement that was once about cleaning up rivers and recycling has lost focus and become radicalized, hijacked by extremists committed more to ideology than science. So it is no wonder that recent polls have found Americans more concerned with the economy than the environment. Earth Day has been losing its credibility.

Activists who led the movement are shifting their focus from the environment to chemicals, casting several useful and safe compounds as insidious, invisible toxins that are poisoning American children. In many cases, these anti-industry activists are using scare tactics and ignoring decades of science to frighten Americans into echoing their ideology. Fair environmental and human health policies should be limited to good science, and in overstating their case, the activists are undermining their own environmental movement.

One clear example is the case of bisphenol A (BPA), a key component used to make epoxy resins and polycarbonate plastic. Environmental activists are devoting a tremendous amount of energy (and dollars) promoting unsound science and demanding bans at the state and federal level. All this in the name of protecting the Earth and human health.

The activists are wasting their time. The science has spoken on BPA. Twelve regulatory agencies around the world, including our hyper-conservative Food and Drug Administration, have examined the science and concluded that BPA is not a risk to human health. In a statement released in January, the FDA wrote that BPA "is not proven to harm children or adults..." This is consistent with the FDA's findings from 2008, which, while conclusive, were updated at the insistence of the activist community and at great cost to taxpayers.

These activists must think they know more than 12 global regulatory agencies do, because they continue to launch attacks on BPA, clinging to a collection of low-dose studies as proof of harm. In an action plan for BPA released last month, the EPA noted the ineffectiveness of these studies: "Regulatory authorities around the world reviewing these low-dose studies have generally concluded that they are insufficient for use in risk assessment because of a variety of flaws in some of the study designs... and the inability of other researchers to reproduce the effects in standardized studies."

By continuing to scare Americans with their demands for completely unnecessary bans, these activists do more than sideline the environment. They threaten the U.S. regulatory system's reliance on science-based decision making, while damaging the economy and public health. In the case of BPA, agencies have not taken restrictive action, but state and federal legislators are coming in to make a political play on the part of frightened constituents and powerful activists. Even worse, a misguided amendment to bar the use of BPA in food containers (The Ban Poisonous Additives Act, sponsored by Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Dianne Feinstein (D-

Calif.)) threatens to derail the much-needed Food Safety Modernization Act. This type of activism is reckless.

Restricting or banning BPA despite all the scientific evidence of its safety -- in addition to the 50-year history of its safe use -- would be fiscally devastating in an already weak economy, eliminating jobs and income for many states. This bill and these activists also ignore the fact that there is no proven safe, effective alternative for BPA. Prior to the use of can liners made with BPA, packaged food contamination, including botulism, was a serious public health problem.

Environmental activists should refocus their efforts on an issue that needs advocates and leaders. Let's take back Earth Day and honor it as it was intended.

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