

# Is TSCA reform reform necessary?

By ACSH Staff — August 5, 2013



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No, that s not a typo. With reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) [almost a reality](#) [2], Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, has decided that the revised law [was itself in need of revision](#) [3], threatening its very existence.

Here s the backstory: for what seems like decades, environmental activists have been calling for reform of the 1976 chemical safety bill, claiming that it is broken because so few chemicals have been regulated under its aegis.

Industry representatives and many [scientists disagreed on the need](#) [4] for making the law more stringent, pointing out that there were few (if any) studies linking environmental chemicals to adverse health effects, contrary to the claims of some anti-chemical groups. Nevertheless, after several attempts over the years to hammer out some improvements in the 37-year-old law, finally a compromise reform, called the Chemical Safety Improvement Act (CSIA), was seemingly agreed upon by its chief Senate negotiators, Democrat Frank Lautenberg of NJ and Republican David Vitter of LA, only last May. (Shortly after the apparent compromise agreement, Sen. Lautenberg passed away at the age of 89). Numerous co-sponsors seemed to make the bill s passage a slam-dunk. Even the chemical industry trade group, the American Chemistry Council, [praised the measure](#). [5]

Not so fast, said Sen. Boxer. She had numerous concerns with the new proposal which she felt had to be addressed before the CSIA could even be considered by her committee, much less by the full Senate. One of her major concerns was that the reform did not allow for states chemical regulations to be more stringent than the federal rules. [Extensive revision was needed](#) [6], she opined: If we don t fix these problems, we re not going to have a bill.

To which ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross replied, Is that supposed to be a threat? Given the absence of chemical-induced health and environmental effects except upon the fevered imaginations of chemophobic activist groups I didn t perceive a need to reform the original law in the first place. I can t recall who said it first, but the old adage applies: If it ain t broke, don t fix it. Our country will somehow go on as before if the reformed TSCA is not further reformed, or even if it is not

reformed at all.

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**Links**

[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Chemicals.jpg>

[2] <http://www.lautenberg.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=342861>

[3] <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-07-31/senator-faults-measure-on-toxic-chemicals-imperiling-compromise>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2011/12/acsh-report-counters-claims-by-natural-resources-defense-council/>

[5] <http://www.americanchemistry.com/Media/PressReleasesTranscripts/ACC-news-releases/ACC-Commends-Senators-Lautenberg-and-Vitter-for-Bipartisan-Leadership-to-Reform-TSCA.html>

[6] <http://www.plasticsnews.com/article/20130802/NEWS/130809976/tsca-overhaul-stalls-over-debate-about-language#>