

***The following statement was issued by Steve Owens, who served as the Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) from July 2009 – November 2011. In this position Mr. Owens oversaw EPA's Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) program. Mr. Owens is now an attorney with Squire Sanders (US) LLP.***

“The introduction of the bipartisan Chemical Safety Improvement Act (CSIA) by Senators Lautenberg, Vitter and a diverse group of other Senators is a major step forward and reflects the broad consensus that TSCA needs to be modernized.

The CSIA is a significant improvement over the current outdated Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The CSIA sets a workable safety standard for chemicals, and it gives EPA the mandate – and the authority – to conduct safety assessments of chemicals, identify chemical risks and take action to protect children and families from exposure to chemicals that present unreasonable risks of harm. Enacted in 1976, TSCA is the only major environmental statute that has never been updated. TSCA has been showing its age – and its limitations – for some time. The CSIA will help bring our nation's chemical management program into the 21st Century.

“In addition to establishing a long-overdue safety standard for chemicals, the CSIA removes many of the procedural barriers that have hampered EPA's implementation of TSCA during the past 37 years. For example, the bill eliminates the current paradoxical requirement that EPA demonstrate that a chemical substance poses a risk before the agency can request much-needed test data on the substance, and it gives EPA the ability to obtain test data without having to go through a time-consuming formal rulemaking process.

“The bill also creates a mechanism by which EPA can prioritize substances currently in commerce for review and, if necessary, additional regulation. When TSCA was enacted in 1976, it allowed over 60,000 chemicals that were in use at that time to continue to be produced without a safety evaluation by EPA. Because of TSCA's shortcomings, review and regulation of these “grandfathered” chemicals has been difficult. The CSIA will help change this.

“I commend Senators Lautenberg and Vitter and their colleagues for achieving such a major breakthrough in the years-long effort to strengthen chemical regulation and protect the public from unreasonable chemical risks.”