

## Center for Health, Environment & Justice

### **If Your Child Says School Makes Him Sick – He Might Be Right.**

*Study Identifies 435 Schools with Toxic Air Pollution While EPA Shirks Responsibility*

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This morning USATODAY released their study of schools where the outside air poses an unacceptable health risk from chemical contamination to young children and school staff. The study identified 435 schools in “toxic hot spots”.

The study reaffirms what the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ) has been reporting since 2001. In several reports, beginning with *Poisoned Schools*, CHEJ presented case studies of school aged children harmed by chemicals in their school environments and called on the federal government to establish school siting guidelines as a tool for local schools boards. Local school board members are not scientists, toxicologists or air modeling experts and need assistance to determine a safe location for schools. **50 state survey of laws and regulations on siting schools.** [http://www.childproofing.org/school\\_siting\\_50\\_state.htm](http://www.childproofing.org/school_siting_50_state.htm) CHEJ recommends adopting the following **model laws for states and as guidelines for the EPA** [http://www.childproofing.org/school\\_siting\\_model\\_legislation.htm](http://www.childproofing.org/school_siting_model_legislation.htm)

In December, 2007 President Bush signed Subtitle E of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, instructing the EPA to develop the nation’s first-ever school siting guidelines to give state legislatures direction in where schools may be physically located in relationship to toxic contamination sites. The EPA has been given a deadline of June, 2009. Nothing has been done since congress passed this directive. No one has even been given the responsibility for this task.

“It is in excusable to place school children in harms way”, said Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of CHEJ. “Children are required by law to go to school. Schools must be safe place for children to learn and play not a place that endangers their health and ability to learn. Asthma is a direct result of air pollution and asthma is the number one reason for school absences.”

“Yes, we’re going to be putting more money into school construction,” President-Elect Obama promised in a "Meet the Press" interview taped Saturday in Chicago. The President-Elect’s commitment to new schools must be matched with a commitment to building schools in safe locations that will not expose our children to hazardous levels of air pollution. A first priority of the Obama Administration should be to move the school siting guidelines to the top of the EPA’s agenda.

Child Proofing Our Communities (CPOC), a CHEJ program to prevent environmental health harm to children, developed the only existing National Model School Siting Policy guidelines to help state groups advance protective school siting policies for their states:  
[http://www.childproofing.org/documents/school\\_siting\\_model\\_legislation.pdf](http://www.childproofing.org/documents/school_siting_model_legislation.pdf)