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## **CPR's Steinzor Details EPA's Superfund Failure in Senate Oversight Hearing; Calls for Reinstatement of 'Polluter Pays'**

Washington, DC ---- Center for Progressive Reform Member Scholar Rena Steinzor today told a Senate panel conducting long-overdue oversight of the Superfund toxic cleanup program that the federal government and polluters “have dragged their feet” on cleaning up toxic dump sites, and that the resulting “toxic stew continues to circulate, moldering and spreading, adding chemicals to aquifers, rising to the surface of the soil as the land freezes and thaws, and releasing methane and other volatile gases” in communities across the nation.

Steinzor is a member of the board of directors of the Center for Progressive Reform, and a professor of law at the University of Maryland School of Law in Baltimore. She testified today before the Subcommittee on Superfund and Environmental Health of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by Senator Hillary Clinton.

Professor Steinzor's testimony drew on the findings of a report issued by CPR and the Center for American Progress focusing on 50 of the most dangerous Superfund sites in the nation's ten most populous states. [The Toll of Superfund Neglect: Toxic Waste Dumps & Communities at Risk](http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund_061506.pdf), is available at [http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund\\_061506.pdf](http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund_061506.pdf).

In her testimony, Steinzor addressed what she described as false legends perpetuated by opponents of Superfund. Among them:

- The assertion that few if any sites endanger public health, which Steinzor called “ludicrous.”
- The claim that cleanups have slowed in recent years because easier and quicker cleanups have been completed, leaving only difficult and time-consuming cleanups. Steinzor said the argument was belied by the Administration's efforts to reduce funding levels for Superfund, even as dangerous sites festered under its watch.
- The claim that EPA has enough money to fund Superfund without renewal of the Superfund tax on polluting corporations. Steinzor noted that because the Administration and the leadership of recent Congresses made no attempt to renew

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the polluter-pays tax, families and individual taxpayers – “are paying to support a program that is starved for resources, [while] crucial tasks are increasingly left undone.” She noted that “in constant dollars, revenues appropriated for the Superfund program now stand at levels 40 percent lower than the amounts Congress specified when it last reauthorized the program in 1986.” She called for reinstatement of the tax.

Steinzor explained that, “The broad-based industry taxes that support the program expired in 1995. President Clinton asked Congress to extend them every year he was in office, and every year, the Congress refused the request. The Bush Administration opposes extension of the tax and has made up chronic shortfalls by drawing on general taxpayer revenues and steadily lowering annual appropriations. In FY 2003, EPA ran through all the money left over from the years when the program was supported by industry taxes and the program has been exclusively supported by general revenues ever since.”

Steinzor told the story of a recently identified toxic waste site in Baltimore. “This past spring,” she said, “Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, the City’s Public Health Commissioner, closed a popular baseball field called Swann Park after old documents came to light revealing that in the late 1970s, arsenic from a nearby Allied Signal pesticide plant had blown onto the park, insinuating itself into the soil at toxic levels. The Maryland Department of the Environment managed to overcome the funding gap that has paralyzed its state Superfund efforts, and ordered that the park be remediated. Undoubtedly, the saga of Swann Park is but the dusting of snow on top of the iceberg, as we will learn over the next decades unless we resuscitate both the federal and state Superfund programs.”

Steinzor co-authored *The Toll of Superfund Neglect*. Among its key findings: In each of the last three years [prior to 2006], only 40 Superfund sites have been declared “construction complete,” compared to at least 85 in each of the four years prior to the Bush administration. Sites are declared “construction complete” when all major construction required for a cleanup is in place. It may still take years more for the actual cleanup to be finished.

Steinzor’s testimony is available on the Environment page of CPR’s website, [http://www.progressivereform.org/issue\\_environment.cfm](http://www.progressivereform.org/issue_environment.cfm). *The Toll of Superfund Neglect* is available at [http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund\\_061506.pdf](http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund_061506.pdf), and the press release describing it is available at [http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund\\_NR.pdf](http://www.progressivereform.org/articles/Superfund_NR.pdf).

*The Center for Progressive Reform* is a nonprofit research and educational organization whose network of scholars across the nation is dedicated to protecting health, safety, and the environment through analysis and commentary. For more information, contact Matthew Freeman at 301-762-8980 or at [mfreeman@progressivereform.org](mailto:mfreeman@progressivereform.org). Visit CPR on the web at [www.progressivereform.org](http://www.progressivereform.org).

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