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West Virginia Chemical Spill Highlights Need for Strengthened Public Protections

Latest in Series of Disasters Following Minimal Regulation and Oversight

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The West Virginia chemical spill that has poisoned the water supply for hundreds of thousands of people is the latest in a series of environmental and safety disasters related to shortcomings in federal and state oversight that have often been driven by vociferous, industry-funded anti-regulatory campaigns.

From the BP explosion and oil spill to the West, Texas, refinery explosion to the new spill in West Virginia, we've seen that the public pays the price when regulatory agencies don't have the legal tools and funding to do their jobs.

If this facility had been required to meet some basic standards and had been inspected regularly, some critics surely would have called it red tape. But such protections are crucial. Standards and safeguards save lives and protect people from corporate bad actors who, left to their own devices, put profits over people's health.

For days, West Virginians affected by the spill have had their lives upended – and have had to leave the Charleston area or rely on limited supplies of bottled water just to get water they can drink and bathe in. We can – and must – do better. Our country needs strong safeguards so we can drink safe water, breathe safe air, eat safe food and drive safe cars.

While there has been progress over the past several decades in making our environment and workplaces healthier and safer, we still have a long way to go. It's time to reform our chemical safety laws – both at the state and federal levels – to prevent the next dangerous accident or spill.

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The Coalition for Sensible Safeguards is an alliance of consumer, labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest groups, as well as concerned individuals, joined in the belief that our country's system of regulatory safeguards provides a stable framework that secures our quality of life and paves the way for a sound economy that benefits us all. For more information about the coalition, see [http://www.sensible safeguards.org/about us](http://www.sensible safeguards.org/about_us).