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March 14, 2011

Honorable Representative Peter King
U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Congress
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative King,

As chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, we know you are deeply concerned about the safety and security of all Americans. We would like to **schedule a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss one of the most serious vulnerabilities to terrorism facing our nation. Since your March 9th hearing on "The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response" we have collected more than 23,000 letters from people across the U.S., including more than 2,000 from New Yorkers.**

These 23,000 letters concern one of our greatest remaining vulnerabilities to domestic terrorism: potential attacks on U.S. chemical plants that store tons of poison gases. **At your February 11th hearing on "Preventing Chemical Terrorism: Building A Foundation of Security At Our Nation's Chemical Facilities" the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) testified that they have identified 4,755 chemical facilities as "high-risk." The DHS also requested that you provide new legislative authority to prevent chemical disasters by requiring the use of safer cost-effective chemical processes at the highest risk plants where feasible.**

The EPA has identified 90 chemical plants that each put one million or more Americans at risk up to 25 miles downwind from a plant, **including at least one New Jersey facility that puts millions of New Yorkers at risk.** While some plants have made the switch since 9/11, according to the EPA 484 plants still put 100,000 or more people at risk.

We would like to present these letters to you as soon as possible and discuss ways to address fatal flaws in the temporary 2006 chemical plant security law so that chemical disasters at U.S. chemical plants can actually be prevented. As we are witnessing with the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters in Japan, worst case scenarios do occur.

As you know, the weak temporary law was enacted **to give Congress time to authorize a comprehensive program similar to what your Committee adopted in July 2006 (H.R. 5695).** The disaster prevention provisions in H.R. 5695 became the basis of the bill (H.R. 2868) that passed the House in 2009. Both of these bills would have required the very highest chemical plants to switch to safer cost-effective chemical processes where feasible. **Unfortunately the current law actually bars any requirement to use safer chemical processes.**

As a result we were very disappointed to see you co-sponsor **H.R. 901 on March 3rd because this bill would merely extend the temporary 2006 law virtually unchanged for seven more years.** As you know, the chemical lobby supports H.R. 901 because it makes no fundamental changes in the current law. In this 10th anniversary year of the 9/11 attacks, we and members of a broad blue-green coalition would like to see Congress adopt a law similar to H.R. 5695 or H.R. 2868.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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