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CA GOVERNOR SIGNS HISTORIC LAW REQUIRING COMPANIES TO DISCLOSE INGREDIENTS IN CLEANING PRODUCTS

Right to Know Act Mandates Ingredient Disclosures – particularly of chemicals harmful to human health - on Labels and Online

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – In a major victory for consumer and worker right to know, Governor Brown has signed into law a bill that requires manufacturers of a wide array of cleaning products to disclose their ingredients.

The [Cleaning Product Right to Know Act of 2017](#) (Senate Bill 258, authored by Senator Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens) requires the ingredients in cleaning products – particularly chemicals whose ability to harm human health or the environment has been recognized by established scientific authoritative bodies – to be listed on both product labels and online. Under this law, the mandatory disclosure also applies to ingredients in fragrance mixtures, which have been tightly-held secrets until now.

Senator Lara facilitated a successful series of negotiations between NGOs and industry stakeholders, which achieved a carefully crafted compromise that won the final approval of California legislators in mid-September. The agreement provides the increased transparency consumers and workers want while also allowing companies to protect trade secrets only for chemicals which are not linked to negative impacts on human health or the environment. The legislation garnered the early support of companies which already practice ingredient transparency – Seventh Generation and The Honest Company – and also some of the world's largest cleaning product companies, including Ecolab, Procter & Gamble, Reckitt Benckiser, SC Johnson, and WD40, and their trade association – the Consumer Specialty Products Association.

“California will be the first in the nation to clear the air for consumers and workers about what is in their cleaning products. Consumers are demanding transparency and the Cleaning Product Right to Know Act will set a strong national standard. Consumer advocates and manufacturers worked together to disclose potentially harmful ingredients while allowing businesses to protect proprietary information and retain some flexibility,” said Senator Lara.

“Consumers and professional cleaners will be able to breathe easier knowing the ingredients in their household and institutional cleaning products,” said Bill Allayaud, EWG's California director of government affairs. “The demand for transparency is growing, as people, workers and business owners want to make informed decisions about the cleaning products they choose to purchase and use.”

Until now, consumers, workers and public health agencies have been left in the dark about the potential presence of allergens, environmental toxicants and chemicals linked

to harmful health effects in cleaning products.

“Consumers are increasingly demanding information about the ingredients in the products they use every day, and this is especially true for cleaning products. Breast cancer prevention advocates everywhere are thrilled with this historic new law because we know it will have a positive impact far beyond California. We are so proud to have sponsored this bill, and to have partnered with a very broad coalition of consumer, worker and industry groups to get it passed,” said Nancy Buermeyer, senior policy strategist for Breast Cancer Prevention Partners.

“This is truly a breakthrough! For the first time ever companies will be legally required to disclose ingredients in fragrance,” said Jamie McConnell, director of programs and policy at Women’s Voices for the Earth. “But passing SB 258 isn’t simply about listing ingredients – it’s about eliminating the barriers that prevent women and men from having the information they need to avoid concerning ingredients like powerful allergens, or synthetic musks linked to breast cancer, or known hormone disruptors like phthalates – all of which can be found in fragrance. Calling this bill a game-changer is an understatement. This is going to change lives.”

Chemicals found in some ordinary cleaning products are known or suspected to cause cancer, birth defects, asthma and other serious health effects. Even cleaning products advertised as “green” or “natural” may contain ingredients that can cause health problems. Ingredient transparency allows consumers to make the right choices for their family’s health.

“We all have the right to know the ingredients in the products we bring into our homes that could affect our health,” said Avinash Kar, a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council. “That’s why consumers overwhelmingly support ingredient disclosure. The cleaning product industry recognized this consumer demand and worked with our coalition to craft a solution in Sen. Lara’s bill. This puts California, once again, at the forefront of public health protections that will benefit all Americans.”

New York is close to finalizing industry guidance also requiring cleaning product ingredient disclosure. This move came in response to a lawsuit filed by environmental, public health and consumer groups and would implement a law that has been on the books since 1971. Cleaning product companies will soon be responding to ingredient disclosure requirements generated by two of the nation’s largest states, raising a new high bar for transparency and creating powerful new incentives to reformulate their products to remove harmful ingredients rather than publicly disclose their presence.

Some companies voluntarily label all the ingredients in their cleaning products, including fragrance ingredients but in the absence of federal, and up until now, state regulations mandating ingredient disclosure, other companies have continued to keep their product ingredients a secret.

Workers - particularly janitors and housekeeping staff - are exposed to chemicals in cleaning products all day, every day. Women account for 9 out of 10 domestic workers and housekeepers, and of those, a majority are Latina or African American. Cleaning ingredients vary in the type of problems they can pose for workers: some cause acute allergic reactions, while others are associated with chronic or long-term effects such as asthma and cancer. Work-related asthma among California’s janitors and cleaners is nearly *double* the rate of the overall workforce.

“While research shines light on the harms of secret chemicals used in common cleaning products, very little of this information makes its way to domestic workers, like house cleaners, who are the most exposed. Domestic workers deserve the right to know and based on that information, hopefully have the ability to leverage the use of better products with their employers,” said Nancy Zuniga of the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California (IDEPSCA). “Commercial cleaning professionals and domestic workers have a right to know what’s hiding in these products so they can protect themselves whenever possible in their workplace – their health shouldn’t be compromised for the work they do. This is an important step forward in eliminating overall toxic exposure.”

“Every day consumers are exposed to chemicals commonly found in products used to clean and disinfect their homes, cars and offices,” said Mayra Soto of Pacoima Beautiful. “Consumers of all socioeconomic backgrounds have a right to know exactly what chemicals are in the products they are buying for themselves and their children. As the expectation of more transparency continues to skyrocket, this mandatory disclosure will guarantee that consumers and workers will know what chemicals are in these cleaners to better protect their health.”

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About:

The Cleaning Product Right to Know Act was co-sponsored by the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, Environmental Working Group, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Women’s Voices for the Earth.

The Breast Cancer Prevention Partners is the leading national organization working to prevent breast cancer by eliminating exposures to toxic chemicals and radiation linked to the disease. Learn more at www.bcpp.org/.

EWG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. Its mission is to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. Learn more at <http://www.ewg.org/>

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 2 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, Montana, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](https://twitter.com/NRDC).

Women’s Voices for the Earth is a national environmental health organization that works to amplify women’s voices to eliminate toxic chemicals that harm our health and communities. Learn more at www.womensvoices.org.