

The KOCH BROTHERS' 10-Year Campaign to Delay Action on FORMALDEHYDE, which is known to Cause Cancer in Humans

David and Charles Koch own Koch Industries, Inc., an industrial conglomerate that includes major oil and chemical interests. The billionaire Koch brothers are notorious funders of right wing, anti-government groups and candidates.¹ In the last 10 years, Koch Industries has spent \$85 million lobbying Congress and \$13 million in campaign contributions, about 90% to Republicans.²

Koch Industries is a Major Producer of Formaldehyde

In 2004, Koch Industries bought two mills from Georgia-Pacific and acquired the entire company in 2005. Georgia-Pacific produced 376 million pounds of formaldehyde at 8 chemical plants in 2011, one of the largest U.S. sources.³

Koch Industries has been a major campaign contributor to Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK), who in 2004 persuaded U.S. EPA to delay revising its risk assessment in order to reanalyze a preliminary study linking formaldehyde to leukemia.⁴

A Koch-led Lobby Downplayed Formaldehyde Dangers

Richard Urschel, President of Georgia-Pacific Chemicals chaired the Formaldehyde Council, which spent \$780,000 lobbying to delay action on formaldehyde, with major funding from Koch Industries.⁵

Hurricane Katrina victims were exposed to dangerous levels of formaldehyde in their FEMA trailers, which the Formaldehyde Council declared were safe.⁶

After a five-year delay, the National Cancer Institute released its final study in 2009, finding a 78% increase in leukemia among 25,000 workers exposed to formaldehyde over 30 years, with higher deaths from other cancers.⁷

The Formaldehyde Council called for a review by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Senator David Vitter (R-LA), another major beneficiary of Koch Industries campaign cash, aggressively persuaded EPA to concede.⁸

Koch Lobbied Against Listing as *Known* Human Carcinogen

Koch Industries co-founded and funds the Formaldehyde Panel of the American Chemistry Council (ACC), the chemical industry lobby group that replaced the Formaldehyde Council in August 2010.⁹

In June 2011, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services issued its long delayed 12th Report on Carcinogens, upgrading the status of formaldehyde

from “reasonably anticipated” to “known” to be a human carcinogen.¹⁰

In 2012, the chemical industry campaigned against formaldehyde’s listing as known to cause cancer, calling for further delay to avoid “public confusion.”¹¹

Chemical industry lobbying continues to delay action. EPA is still revising its formaldehyde risk assessment and the NAS has undertaken another review.¹²

The Koch Lobby Opposed Maine’s Listing as Priority Chemical

In January 2014, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proposed to name formaldehyde as a Priority Chemical under the Kid Safe Products Act, which was opposed in testimony by the Koch-funded ACC Formaldehyde Panel. In May, the Maine DEP *dropped* its proposed formaldehyde rule, caving into the chemical industry’s lobbying pressure.¹³

Sources Cited:

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³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Chemical Data Reporting, Chemical Data Access Tool, Search for “formaldehyde”: http://java.epa.gov/oppt_chemical_search/

⁴ Joaquin Sapien, ProPublica, “How Senator Vitter Battled the EPA Over Formaldehyde’s Link to Cancer,” April 15, 2010. <http://www.propublica.org/article/how-senator-david-vitter-battled-formaldehyde-link-to-cancer>; Letter from Sen. Inhofe to Michael Leavitt, U.S. EPA, Nov. 5, 2004:

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⁵ Formaldehyde Council, Form 990 for 2007, submitted to Internal Revenue Service; Georgia-Pacific Chemicals, About Us: <http://www.gp-chemicals.com/ProfileAndHistory>; Center for Responsive Politics, OpenSecrets.org, Influence & Lobbying: Formaldehyde Council:

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⁶ Cathy Hughes, *The Times-Picayune*, “FEMA trailer formaldehyde response called too slow.” Betsy Natz, Executive Director of the Formaldehyde Council was quoted as saying: “Americans should feel confident that formaldehyde-based products ... are safe,” July 24, 2009.

http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2009/07/fema_trailer_formaldehyde_resp.html

⁷ Joaquin Sapien, ProPublica, “Study Reinforces Link between Formaldehyde and Cancer,” May 18, 2009, <http://www.propublica.org/article/study-reinforces-links-between-formaldehyde-and-cancer-518>;

⁸ See Footnote 4.

⁹ American Chemistry Council, “ACC Forms New Formaldehyde Panel,” August 24, 2010.

<http://www.americanchemistry.com/Media/PressReleasesTranscripts/ACC-news-releases/ACC-Forms-New-Formaldehyde-Panel.html>

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Toxicology Program, Formaldehyde, 12th Report on Carcinogens, July 2011, <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/ntp/roc/twelfth/profiles/formaldehyde.pdf>

¹¹ Letter from Cal Dooley, American Chemistry Council, to Congress, April 25, 2012, <http://www.americanchemistry.com/Policy/Regulatory-Reform/ACC-Letter-to-House-Science-Committee-Regarding-Joint-Hearing-on-the-Report-on-Carcinogens.pdf>

¹² American Chemistry Council, Formaldehyde in the United States, November 2013,

<http://www.americanchemistry.com/ProductsTechnology/Formaldehyde/Formacare-Newsletter.pdf>

¹³ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Rule Notice, Chapter 885: Designation of Formaldehyde as a Priority Chemical and Regulation in Children’s Products. <http://www.maine.gov/dep/rules/#609395>