

March 5, 2007

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

I'm Dr. Steve Breyman, Executive Director of Citizens' Environmental Coalition. Founded in 1983, CEC is New York's only statewide anti-toxics group. With offices in Buffalo and Albany, and with our 110 organizational and 14,000 individual members, we work to clean up the state's legacy of toxic pollution, and to prevent present and future pollution as we move towards the Governor's "innovation economy."

CEC is cheered by the environmental funding laid out in Governor Spitzer's 2007-2008 Executive Proposal introduced to this chamber at the end of January. Like our friends in the environmental movement, we are pleased to see the staff increases: 109 at the Department of Environmental Conservation, 52 at the Office of Parks and Recreation, and five at the Adirondack Park Agency. We are thrilled that his budget request includes an update of New York's quarter-century old Bottle Bill. Analysis shows that the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is likely to grow by \$100 million or more over the next two years as a consequence of funneling the unclaimed nickels into the EPF instead of the overflowing coffers of the giant, globe-straddling bottling firms. CEC is happy to see that the Governor calls for a new Office of Climate Change within DEC.

What most excites us is that after nearly twenty years of our advocating for it, Governor Spitzer saw fit to include \$2 million for a Pollution Prevention Institute with Green Chemistry Program. For critics skeptical of the Governor's commitment to the "innovation economy," pollution prevention, and the distressed Upstate economy, this is one of the places where the rubber meets the road. What we envision is an independent organization like the Massachusetts Toxic Use Reduction Institute. It will engage in applied research, including on cutting edge technologies, and in still unfolding areas of science. Its Green Chemistry component will enable New York's brightest minds to redesign chemicals and substances at the molecular level. These new substances will include the bio-based, reducing New York's \$35 billion annual dependence on imported oil and natural gas. Imagine fashioning new products, like plastics and other composites, from corn grown in Upstate New York, rather than natural gas from Libya.

The Pollution Prevention Institute will train hundreds of Pollution Prevention Planners who will fan out across the state to provide technical assistance to struggling manufacturers about how to streamline, clean-up, and re-engineer their processes. As has been the case in Massachusetts, these firms will improve their bottom lines while reducing the toxic pollution they emit and the energy they consume. Businesses will now have a one-stop shop for all their pollution prevention needs. And New York manufacturers will indeed need the new Institute: the European Union has recently set new regulations regarding hazardous substances and chemicals. To continue to sell in the EU, New York enterprises must comply with these regulations. The Pollution Prevention Institute will go a long way towards reducing the costs of compliance with those new regulations.

But it will do much more as well. The Pollution Prevention Institute will ensure that new environmentally and economically superior technologies researched and developed in laboratories are transferred to and commercialized by New York firms. We are not talking about some ivory tower detached from the daily realities of competition in the global economy. To the contrary, the Pollution Prevention Institute that New York needs will look to restore this country's lost preeminence in environmental science and technology. As a young man, I was proud of America's leadership in environmental regulation and products. We were the first in the world with an Environmental Protection Agency. We passed the world's first Endangered Species Act. Much of the very best early R&D on renewable energy technologies took place in the US. Due to inaction—and worse—at the federal level, that leadership has since been taken away from us by the Japanese, the Europeans, and now, even the Chinese.

And, of course, our competition is not only international. With the Governor's proposed Pollution Prevention Institute, and other environmental initiatives, New York finally again has the opportunity to give California a run for its money as the most environmentally sensible state in the Union. I propose that we no longer let Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California State Legislature get all the environmental headlines for all their innovative green initiatives, and that we return to the days when the Empire State towered over the Golden State.

With the recent executive-legislative agreements on worker's compensation, and on civil confinement, and with the Senate Majority's appointment of a Minority member as Social Services Committee chair, it appears anything is possible in contemporary Albany. A New York State Pollution Prevention Institute was not possible during the past twelve or twenty years. Given the Governor's vision, and the good sense of the NYS Legislature, it is possible today.

Thank you.

Steve Breyman, Ph.D.
Executive Director