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March 14, 2011

Dr. John Holdren
Director, Office of Science & Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Dr. Holdren:

I write to urge you to immediately reverse the Bush Administration's decision to ignore my legislation, enacted as Section 127 of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, to make potassium iodide (KI) available to State and local governments to meet the needs of all persons living within a 20 mile radius of a nuclear power plant. Potassium iodide is a safe, effective and inexpensive means of protecting against the cancer-causing effects of radioactive iodine, which has already been detected around one of the impacted Japanese reactors.

In a subversion of the intent of the Congress, the Bush White House chose to ignore these provisions and declined to implement them, thereby denying communities access to stockpiles of KI. In December 2009, I wrote¹ President Obama urging him to move forward with full implementation of the provisions. Unfortunately, that has not occurred. On July 23, 2010, your staff sent a letter² to my staff upholding the Bush Administration's position. I believe that you and the President are being ill-served by the advice you have received from your staff on this matter and I must tell you that a continued failure to implement this common-sense measure would be irresponsible.

One need only look at cancer rates after the Chernobyl disaster³: The accident caused numerous thyroid cancers and other thyroid disorders in Belarusian children (as well as in exposed children in other countries) due to exposure to radioactive iodine. In contrast, because Poland quickly administered KI, no cases of thyroid cancer were found in those given KI, and follow-up studies of these individuals have found no significant long-term health effects. The National Academy of Sciences confirmed⁴ the utility of KI in responding to the threat posed by

¹ <http://markey.house.gov/docs/ejmttoobamakidec092.pdf>

² http://markey.house.gov/docs/whitehouse_ostp_to_ejm_july2010.pdf

³ Nauman J, Wolff J. (1993) Iodide prophylaxis in Poland after the Chernobyl reactor accident: Benefits and risks. *The American Journal of Medicine*, Volume 94, Issue 5, Pages 524-532.

⁴ "Distribution and Administration of Potassium Iodide in the Event of a Nuclear Incident," National Academies of Science, 2004 http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10868&page=1

radioactive iodine in a nuclear accident, and as the President's science advisor you have an obligation to follow the science and Congressional intent in implementing this law.

The Japanese nuclear crisis is already worse than the Three Mile Island accident and is clearly the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl. Japan reportedly is now distributing KI to its citizens. We should not wait for a catastrophic accident or a terrorist attack on a nuclear reactor in this country to occur to implement this common-sense emergency preparedness measure. Please move quickly to do so.

I look forward to your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey