COMMITTEES

NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING DEMOCRAT

ENERGY AND COMMERCE

EDWARD J. MARKEY
7TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

2108 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515–2107
(202) 225–2836

DISTRICT OFFICES:

5 HIGH STREET, SUITE 101
MEDFORD, MA 02155
(781) 396–2900

188 CONCORD STREET, SUITE 102
FRAMINGHAM, MA 01702
(508) 875–2900

http://markey.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–2107

March 25, 2011

President Christine Gregoire
National Governors Association
Hall of the States
444 N. Capitol St.
Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001-1512

Vice Chair Dave Heineman
National Governors Association
Hall of the States
444 N. Capitol St.
Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001-1512

Dear Governors Gregoire and Heineman:

I write to request that you join me in urging President Obama to implement my 2002 law requiring the distribution of potassium iodide to the people in at least 33 states who live within 20 miles of the nation's 104 nuclear power reactors. Potassium iodide, known by its chemical symbol KI, protects the thyroid gland by flooding it with stable iodine so that the gland cannot take up the cancer-causing radioactive form,[1] which can be released during nuclear reactor melt-downs such as the one now unfolding in Japan. If an earthquake, terrorist attack, or accident were to cause a radiation release in the United States, one of the greatest risks to citizens' health would be radioactive forms of the chemical element iodine. Radioactive forms of the element iodine are readily taken up by the thyroid gland and cause cancers and other debilitating diseases. Children are the most vulnerable because their thyroid glands concentrate more iodine on a mass basis than adults and are more sensitive to radiation because of their rapidly growing cells. Thyroid cancer was the biggest negative health impact caused by the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster. [2] More than 6,000 Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian residents who were children at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster developed thyroid cancer. The incidence of thyroid cancer in the contaminated areas was triple that of normal thyroid cancer incidence in the area.[3] Despite the elevated levels of radioactive iodine detected in Poland after the Chernobyl accident, exposed individuals in Poland did not experience such an increase in thyroid cancer because they were provided with prophylactic KI.[4]

In 2002, I authored Section 127 of the Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act, which directed the President to establish a program to make KI available free to State and local

---

1 http://www.birdflumanual.com/resources/Self_Defense/files/Guidance%20for%20use%20of%20KI%20for%20nuclear%20emergency%20USG.pdf

2 http://www.unscear.org/docs/reports/2008/Advance_copy_Annex_D_Chernobyl_Report.pdf

3 http://www.unscear.org/docs/reports/2008/Advance_copy_Annex_D_Chernobyl_Report.pdf

4 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.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

HHS rejected the attempt to torture the plain meaning and intent of my amendment, at which time the White House rescinded the agency's regulatory authorities and assigned the President's science adviser to reinterpret the law in the fashion favored by the NRC and the industry. Unfortunately, Dr. Holdren, President Obama's Science Advisor, has not yet reversed this misinterpretation of the law, despite my urging him to move forward with proper interpretation of the law, so that HHS can move forward to make KI available.

Thank you for your consideration of joining my call upon President Obama to distribute potentially life-saving potassium iodide to people living near nuclear power reactors. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Ilya Fischhoff or Dr. Michal Freedhoff of my staff at 202-225-2836.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey