

# NMA Annual Environmental Health Task Force **2013** Report

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**NMA's 113<sup>TH</sup> President, Rahn Bailey M.D., and 114<sup>th</sup> President, Michael Lenoir M.D., continued the Environmental Health Task Force and appointed its Co-Chairs.**

**Members:** Drs. Mark Mitchell (Co-chair), Jewel Crawford (Co-chair), Cedric Bright, Millicent Collins, Frances Dunston, Edith Mitchell, Albert Morris, Myrtis Sullivan, Dyann Waugh, Leonard Weather, and Yolanda Whyte

## **2013 Highlights**

1. Grant: The Environmental Health Task Force applied for and successfully received a grant for \$75,000 from the John Merck Fund (not affiliated with Merck Pharmaceuticals) to fund part of Dr. Mitchell's and Dr. Whyte's time to help NMA work on chemical policy advocacy efforts. This is the first private foundation grant received by NMA in recent years.
2. Louisiana Medical Association and other NMA members called, wrote, and visited staff of Sen. Vitter and Sen. Landrieu—both key to national chemical reform—asking for chemical policy legislation that adequately protects human health. 10 NMA physicians met with Sen. Landrieu's Chief of Staff during the Colloquium to discuss chemical policy and the Affordable Care Act. Her staff later stated that the LMA was the first Black professional group in the state to advocate on anything with her office in recent years and one of only two groups advocating on behalf of poor people. Several people reported that LMA was the most effective group in keeping her from signing onto the Republican industry bill and in helping get a better, bipartisan bill introduced.
3. UN Mercury Treaty: Dr. Mark Mitchell represented the NMA at the Sixth International Negotiations Conference for a Legally Binding Mercury Treaty. This was the final negotiations with over 130 nations conducted in Geneva, Switzerland in January 2013. The treaty requires that the ratifying countries reduce mercury from many sources including thermometers, sphygmomanometers, and mercury amalgam dental fillings.

## **Advocacy**

1. Dr. Weather, Dr. Whyte, and Dr. Mitchell met with Senate staff in 26 offices to advocate for health protective chemical policy.
2. Task Force members met with DHHS staff to advocate for reduction in medical and dental use of mercury in advance of the UN Mercury Treaty Negotiations

3. The NMA's Missouri affiliate, Mound City Medical Forum, set up a meeting with Sen. Claire McCaskill's staff in St. Louis on March 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss chemical policy.
4. Dr. Mitchell met with EPA staff to discuss concerns about CSIA in October 2013

### **Letters**

1. National NMA, and NMA state affiliates in Florida, North Carolina, and Missouri signed onto a letter to Sen. Vitter of Louisiana expressing concern that he might introduce a bill that does not adequately protect people from toxic chemicals. An article about the letter was published in the trade newspaper, E & E News in February 2013
2. Dr. Michael Lenoir, NMA's 114<sup>th</sup> President, wrote a letter to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee asking them to strengthen CSIA in August 2013
3. The Environmental Health Task Force submitted a letter for the public record supporting EPA's proposed new rule to regulate formaldehyde in wood products in October 2013

### **News Articles**

1. Sen. Lautenberg's office asked NMA to support the Safe Chemicals Act, which we did (see Philadelphia Inquirer article on April 19), and the newer, bipartisan Chemical Safety Improvement Act (CSIA) which we have not done.
2. Dr. Claude Tellis submitted opinion letters to the Baton Rouge Advocate and the New Orleans Times Picayune, although neither was published.
3. Dr. Mitchell helped Richard Moore and Sofia Martinez write an op-ed on CSIA that was published in the three largest New Mexican newspapers.
4. Dr. Mitchell wrote an article that was published in the August 2013 issue of The Legislator, the magazine of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators

### **Media Events**

1. Dr. Leonard Weather presented at a Senate briefing on Chemical Policy and Infertility on May 10, 2013.
2. Dr. Whyte spoke at the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families National Stroller Brigade in October 2013

### **Resolutions**

1. The House of Delegates passed a proposed resolution to not support the Chemical Safety Improvement Act (CSIA S. 1009) unless it is strengthened.
2. Dr. Mitchell drafted a resolution on CSIA slated to pass the American Medical Association at their November meeting. It directs them to work with NMA and SCHF on this issue, as well as to call for strengthening the bill.

### **Medical Education**

Environmental Health Task Force has continued to provide environmental health education on chemical policy and other issues to NMA members and other health professionals, reaching 440 professionals at 13 events in 2013.

1. Task Force members Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Whyte presented at each of the Regional Conferences:
  - NMA Region I and VI conference in Montego Bay, Jamaica before 50 attendees- May 24, 2013
  - NMA Region III conference in Greensboro, NC before 35 attendees- June 21, 2013
  - NMA Region IV conference in Indianapolis, IN before 40 attendees- June 1, 2013
  - NMA Region V conference in Little Rock, AR before 40 attendees- June 8, 2013
2. Dr. Mitchell presented to the NMA House of Delegates at the National Colloquium on African American Health to 75 attendees on March 11, 2013
3. Dr. Mitchell presented to the Louisiana Medical Association at their annual conference before 25 attendees in Baton Rouge on June 1, 2013
4. Dr. Whyte presented on chemical policy and environmental advocacy were to health professionals
  - Atlanta Black Nurses Association/ Southern Alliance for Clean Energy Environmental Health Symposium before an audience of 30 attendees- February 1, 2013
  - University of Georgia-Athens to 50 environmental health science professionals and students- April 27, 2013
5. NMA, EPA, Mossville Environmental Action Now, and U of Texas provided environmental health training on January 25 and April 19, 2013 to 15 attendees in Lake Charles, Louisiana.
6. Dr. Dyann Waugh, Dr. Whyte, and Dr. Mitchell presented at the NMA Convention:
  - On Occupational Health Return to Work to CMPH 15 participants
  - On Hydraulic Fracturing and Health to CMPH-15 participants
  - On Environment and Asthma to Peds and AAI-50 participants