



Public Comment Summary

Historical Document

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Ten meeting participants provided comments in the time available, and others wishing to speak remained at the forum's conclusion. In addition, eight persons provided comments and questions through the live Web cast. [Comments \(docs/webcastq.pdf\)](#) received from Web cast participants were not addressed during the meeting due to the time limitations.

Participants (see list below) offered their varied perspectives on issues related to the National Conversation and concerns about the process. Participant comments included insights into community frustrations, recommendations for improvements in public health protection that could be implemented at the national, state, and local levels, and suggestions to help ensure a successful National Conversation. The bullet points below identify issues raised by speakers during the public forum portion of the meeting. They do not attempt to summarize each statement made by persons in the public forum. Points are listed under the major themes that emerged from the comments.

Challenges of the Past and Present

- Delays in disseminating science out to the community are part of the problem.
- There is a lack of transparency regarding knowledge gaps, synergy between chemicals, mixtures, disproportionate risks for people with preexisting conditions, elevated asthma rates among children in urban areas, and problems associated with evaluating chemicals on the basis of average conditions.
- Communities have had difficulty getting honest information from federal agencies.
- ATSDR's health assessments and consultations need consistency across sites. The approach taken to them has caused harm.*
- Conflict of interest policies for scientific processes are too weak in the United States.
- The experience of the Mossville, Louisiana community is unacceptable.
- It is unacceptable for communities to be living in FEMA trailers containing formaldehyde.
- Data gaps at the local level can complicate understanding of the bigger picture.

Recommendations for Improved Protection of Public Health

- We need to integrate and institutionalize environmental medicine.
- We must study and treat those made ill by exposure.
- Corporations should prove the safety of the products they make and sell.
- We need to operate under the precautionary principle.*
- Domestic mercury use is a public health concern.
- We should place a health tax on companies.
- We must reconsider risk assessment as a methodology.
- Communities need to be given the capacity to participate.
- Having the data, facts, and documentation does not guarantee action. Lack of response is unacceptable.

- A commitment should be made to change how health assessments are done. They must advocate for the citizens.
- Many agency officials must make site visits and then act on knowledge gained.

Recommendations for the National Conversation Process

- The National Conversation must address the issues raised in “Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: Problems in the Past, Potential for the Future,” a March 2009 report by the Majority Staff of the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight of the Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives.
- The agenda for this meeting gives too little time, too late in the morning for participants to speak. We must use the conversation to serve the impacted.*
- ATSDR must recognize its pivotal role in protecting health for all communities.
- Representation of occupational health issues is necessary.
- The question of disparities in power – between large corporations and consumers – is missing from the conversation; the issue of power generates other problems and should be addressed.
- We must learn from the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council process that attempted to achieve goals similar to the National Conversation.
- We need honesty and willingness to collaborate to produce action.
- We need assurance that other parts of the federal government (e.g. Department of Defense) will respect discussions that take place as part of the National Conversation.
- Action must be part of the conversation.*

**Noted by more than one person*

Participants

Click on the names below to read the complete statements of public forum participants.

- [Lisa Nagy \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=21\)](#), Preventive and Environmental Health Alliance
- [Jay Feldman \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=22\)](#), Beyond Pesticides
- [Dave Egilman \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=23\)](#), Brown University
- [Jerry Ensminger \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=23\)](#), Camp Lejeune Community Assistance Panel
- [Constance Thomas \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=24\)](#), South Fulton and Fayette Community Task Force
- [Michele Roberts \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=25\)](#), Advocates for Environmental Human Rights
- [Arnold Wendroff \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=26\)](#), Mercury Poisoning Project
- [Charlotte Keys \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=27\)](#), Jesus’ People Against Pollution
- [Robert Bullard \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=28\)](#), Environmental Justice Resource Center, Clark Atlanta University
- [Lin Kaatz-Chary \(docs/o62609_transcript3.pdf#page=29\)](#), Gary CARE Partnership

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