

## chemical security initiative

In January 2005, FACT joined with the Jenifer Altman and Kapor Foundations in commissioning a report outlining a strategy for bringing the labor and the environmental sectors together to “reframe” homeland security as a progressive value by using it to address a long-standing issue that pre-dates 9/11, known as “chemical security.”

Chemical security refers to the effort to phase out widely used and frequently mishandled industrial chemicals that pose an existing threat to the health and safety of workers and the general public. That ongoing danger is only exacerbated by potential terrorist attacks on chemical facilities, which could further expose millions of Americans to lethal levels of these toxic chemicals.

There are 15,000 chemical facilities in 50 states that must report their worst-case chemical disaster scenarios to the EPA. Of these, almost 8,000 pose a so-called “off-site consequence” to at least 1,000 people, and more than 100 plants could harm potentially a million or more. Each of these facilities represents an opportunity not only for a potentially devastating terrorist attack, but also evidence that the White House and chemical industry are asleep at the wheel, and the consequent need for cross-sector “blue-green” collaboration, organizing, and activism.

Although there are currently a few local and state campaigns on chemical security, the majority of efforts to date have been through a national legislative effort coordinated between DC-based environmental groups and the leadership of some international unions. Although this has garnered the attention of the news media and Congress, the environmental groups involved acknowledge that they lack a strong grassroots component. A coordinated labor-environmental campaign can achieve real community mobilization at the local and state levels.

The report, “Potential Labor and Environmental Health Advocate Collaboration,” was released in July 2005 and outlined a number of funding recommendations for interested foundations. In 2006, the Chemical Security Initiative will bring together organized labor and environmental health advocates to begin to build a multi-layered, collaborative campaign at the local, state, and national levels that would complement existing strategies and collaborations to phase out chemicals that pose a danger to the general public and workers.