

## **Resolution 3.05 - Environmental Health**

Whereas, a large percentage of U.S. Latinos live and work in urban and agricultural areas where they face heightened exposure to air pollution, unsafe drinking water, pesticides, lead and mercury contamination.

Whereas, Latinos dominate the workforces most exposed to second-hand smoke, including hotel and restaurant work, construction, agriculture and other under-regulated sectors and are more likely to have occupations exposing them to asbestos, textile, silica and coal dust, poisons, radiation and certain biological agents.

Whereas, despite the serious risks, government officials and some in the scientific community have largely overlooked the impact of pollution and second-hand smoke on the health of Latinos; federal and state agencies fail to collect relevant data; few studies assess environmental health threats in Latino communities; and many government authorities, industry, farm operators, and landlords fail to provide warnings in Spanish about environmental health threats.

Whereas Latinos, whether employed or unemployed, are more likely to be uninsured than any racial or ethnic group and are thus more likely to be heavily impacted by environmental health threats.

In passing this resolution, we are asking that:

1. The federal, state and local governments adopt and implement the Ten Commitments to Protect Farmworkers from Toxic Pesticides formulated by the farmworker and advocate organizations listed thereon and guarantee (Global Pesticide Campaigner Vol. 8, Number 4) Dec. 1998 and guarantee those rights for farm communities as well.
2. The federal, state and local governments adopt and support policies and legislation (legislation) which eliminate the exposure of the public to environmental tobacco smoke (second hand smoke).
3. The federal, state and local governments make funding available for the study of health effects on Latino and other minority communities from heightened exposure to air, water and toxics pollution, pesticides, and second-hand smoke and for a lead-screening program in low income housing, including cumulative effects of ozone, particulate matter and pesticides, and make the results of these tests available to the public. Every state should report the results of blood level testing, including the race and ethnicity of every child tested to track progress of

lead poisoning prevention programs.

4. The federal, state and local governments inform the Latino community about the health effects of pollution on their community, the specific hazards posed by conditions in their community and ways to reduce their health risks, using Spanish materials and media outlets as necessary and involve Latinos in stakeholder discussion about proposed legislation affecting their interests.

5. The federal and state government should adopt Community Right-to-Know Legislation that warns citizens when sewage is being dumped into rivers, lakes and waterways.

6. The federal government increase funding to build and improve drinking water systems in the U.S. - Mexico border region and to improve sewage treatment across the country. Investment in water infrastructure should be increased at all levels of government, and funds should be used more efficiently to improve such infrastructure. Existing standards and permits should be enforced.

7. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should enforce regulations that require power plants to install modern pollution controls when they make upgrades that would increase pollutant emissions. The EPA should withdraw its recent changes to these regulations.

8. The EPA should require power plants to install the best available technology to achieve maximum control of mercury emissions and should require prompt reduction of as much as 90 percent in mercury emissions from power plants.

9. The federal, state, and local governments should require prompt cleanup of toxic waste and other hazardous chemical contamination in a manner that is fully protective of the health of children and vulnerable populations in Latino and all communities, particularly those communities disproportionately affected by toxic chemicals from multiple sources.

10. Note the Ten Commitments to Protect Farmworkers from Toxic Pesticides as:

a. Prohibit the use of any pesticide known or suspected to cause cancer, birth defects, neurological damage, or that are in the highest acute toxicity category. During any phaseout period, require a minimum 14 day quarantine period before workers can reenter a work area in which any such pesticide has been applied.

b. Prohibit all aerial application of pesticides.

- c. Guarantee farmworkers the right to know what specific pesticides are used in their workplace through crop sheets, posting of warning signs and training which covers health effects, protective clothing and other safety information in the language the workers understand.
- d. Require and enforce a mandatory national pesticide use reporting system for all users to include all active and inert ingredients in all products.
- e. Require and enforce a mandatory national reporting system for all potential pesticide-related incidents and illnesses by agricultural employers and health professionals.
- f. Guarantee all farmworkers the right to bring an action to enforce their rights under the law including employer retaliation, violation of the U.S. Worker Protection Standard and regulation of toxic pesticides.
- g. Guarantee all farmworkers the rights to organize, have union representation, earn a living wage and overtime pay, have strong child labor provisions, work in a safe workplace and obtain workers' compensation benefits.
- h. Require and fund a continuing program, with the cooperation and approval of farm workers, for both biological and environmental monitoring of pesticides among farm worker families and their communities.
- i. Require and fund research, with the cooperation and approval of farm workers, to set up a program to monitor long-term effects of pesticides including cancer, reproductive harm and neurological damage.
- j. Change federal and state agricultural funding to promote and research the transition from toxic pesticides to bionational and sustainable pest control methods.