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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

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EFFORTS TO STOP HERBICIDE SPRAYING CONTINUE

Dear Friend:

The Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and industrial users of phenoxy herbicides are continuing to spew dangerous chemicals into our environment. Worse, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they continue to insist that their use of phenoxy herbicides is both safe and efficient.

I am happy to report, however, that we who oppose the reckless use of these dangerous chemicals are making progress in the fight to control their widespread use.

GOVERNMENT KNOWS VIRTUALLY NOTHING ABOUT HERBICIDE EFFECTS

Under current law, the victims of herbicide spraying are faced with the expensive and complicated task of proving these chemicals are harmful. This law must be changed, so that the agencies and businesses that want to use dangerous chemicals will be held responsible for their actions.

25641 There is a simple reason for shifting the burden of proof to those who want to use phenoxy herbicides: no one has any idea of how much harm these chemicals can do in our environment. In fact, it has recently come to light that many of the original health and safety tests on these chemicals were completely inadequate. For example, Environmental Protection Agency approval of several herbicides, including 2,4-D and Round-Up, was based at least in part on fraudulent tests conducted by Industrial Bio-Test Laboratories. The directors of that company were recently found guilty of criminal fraud in a trial over the testing of these and other chemicals.

In addition to this recent finding, a 1981 study commissioned by the EPA found that almost all the data used for decisions about using forest herbicides came from studies conducted on non-forest systems. The fact is, there is practically no data on the effects of these dangerous chemicals in the soil and water of our forests.

REFORMING GOVERNMENT POLICY ON HERBICIDES

It's inexcusable that the federal government has continued to allow widespread use of phenoxy herbicides without adequate information about the chemicals' effects. Common sense dictates that we should understand the effects of these chemicals before more unsuspecting victims are endangered.

To help accomplish this, I've introduced H.R. 2799, the "Vegetation Management Reform Act." If this bill passes, users of phenoxy herbicides will for the first time have to prove that the chemicals they are spraying are necessary and will not cause damage to people or the environment. The bill will restrict, and in many cases prohibit the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management from spraying phenoxy herbicides in our forests, by requiring Forest Supervisors or District Managers to determine on a case-by-