

OpEd: New president needs to create chemistry with industry

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Contact: Elvin Montero
609.392.4214

emontero@chemistrycouncilnj.org

New president needs to create chemistry with industry

By HAL BOZARTH

For President-elect Barack Obama, getting elected might have been the easy part. Now he, and the new Congress, must grapple with a deep and complex financial crisis.

The new administration and Congress need to understand the crucial role the \$664 billion business of chemistry plays in the Shore area's economy, the state's economy and in the economy of the country as a whole.

In Monmouth, Middlesex and Ocean counties, the chemistry industry directly employs 16,712 people, according to the most recent state Bureau of Labor Statistics figures. The industry's annual payroll in those three counties is \$1.4 billion. In the entire state, the business of chemistry directly employs approximately 70,400 employees, with an average industry wage of \$99,840 per worker and an annual payroll of \$7 billion, according to government data. An additional 335,000 jobs in the state are generated indirectly by chemical industry activity.

Maintaining this vital work force along with America's global leadership will require Obama and Congress to recognize that our industry is a national asset that should be supported by policies - especially in four crucial policy areas:

Energy. The chemistry industry is enabling families and businesses to conserve energy. Chemistry goes into products that enhance America's energy efficiency. We've reduced our greenhouse gas emissions 13 percent from 1990 to 2007, despite production increases, and have improved energy efficiency at our plants 27 percent since 1990. America needs strong presidential leadership to increase energy efficiency and conservation, promote alternative and renewable technologies and expand access to domestic energy supplies.

Competitive freight rail services. Many American Chemistry Council (ACC) members and their customers depend on the railroads to provide reliable and competitive service. America needs leadership in Washington that will end rail monopolies and promote a healthy, reliable, competitively priced freight rail system.

Chemical plant security. ACC and its member companies are committed to safeguarding America's chemical facilities. To date, our members have invested more than \$6 billion in security enhancement, and they led the charge to establish national chemical security regulations. America needs a president who will support permanent chemical security standards and continue to enforce risk-based security regulations.

Chemical regulation and health. The chemistry industry works closely with government, academic and nongovernment organizations, spending more than \$14 billion per year to comply with federal regulations and \$27 billion per year on research and development. Despite an extraordinary safety record, our

industry continues to face attacks that simply are not supported by the science. America needs the new president to lead a government response to public concerns based on solid health-related information.

ACC and chemistry companies in the Shore region have fostered strong bipartisan relationships in Washington. We know the kind of leadership the nation requires. To us, it is a matter of creating the right chemistry.

Hal Bozarth is executive director of the Chemistry Council of New Jersey, Trenton.

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The Chemistry Council of New Jersey (CCNJ), founded in 1955, is the premier trade and advocacy organization representing the interests of about 100 New Jersey manufacturers in the business of chemistry. Our membership consists of large and small companies that are part of New Jersey's chemical, pharmaceutical, consumer packages goods, petroleum, flavor & fragrances and precious metals industries. The CCNJ is committed to a better quality of life through science.