

# Obama to sign toxic chemical rules; 1st overhaul in 40 years

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President Barack Obama will sign into law the first overhaul of toxic chemical rules in 40 years while hailing a rare moment of cooperation between Republicans and Democrats.

Lawmakers from both parties planned to join Obama on Wednesday for the ceremony, along with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, environmental advocates and industry groups that backed the legislation. White House press secretary Josh Earnest said the bill, which passed with broad bipartisan support, was an outlier in a political climate in which the two parties agree on little.

"Any time you see Democrats and Republicans come together on a piece of legislation, it does reflect a measure of compromise, which means that there may be some people who will criticize it because it's not perfect," Earnest said.

In addition to updating rules for tens of thousands of everyday chemicals used in household cleaners, clothing and furniture, the bill also sets safety standards for [dangerous chemicals](#) like formaldehyde, asbestos and styrene. The goal is to standardize on the national level what is currently a jumble of state rules governing the \$800 billion-per-year industry.

Congress spent more than three years working on the bill, which rewrites the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act and aims to "bring chemical regulation into the 21st century," according to the American Chemistry

Council, which backed the overhaul.

The bill passed the Senate on a voice vote, reflecting an unusual degree of consensus for legislation that gives the EPA new authority to assess the safety of new and existing chemicals. In recent years, many Republicans have worked to pull funding for the EPA or eliminate it entirely.

But business groups had sought a single, federal standard to eliminate the complexity of dealing with state regulations that don't always line up with each other. Still, some Republicans opposed the legislation and called it an overzealous Washington takeover of a matter they said should be left to the states.

The bill's namesake, former New Jersey Sen. Frank Lautenberg, died in 2013 after having worked for years to fix the law.

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