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ALLARD SEEKS IMMEDIATE MARK-UP OF EPA OMBUDSMAN LEGISLATION SAYS BI-PARTISAN BILL WILL RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO), along with four other U.S. Senators, has written a letter to the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee Chairman Jim Jeffords (I-VT) asking him to immediately mark-up the Ombudsman Reauthorization Act of 2001.

In March of last year, Allard and Idaho U.S. Senators Mike Crapo and Larry Craig introduced legislation (S. 606) to make the Office of the Ombudsman independent. The legislation was inspired by the Shattuck Superfund case in Denver. On June 25, the EPW Committee held a hearing on the legislation.

“Without this legislation, the integrity of the Ombudsman’s Office is not protected, putting at risk a legitimate process for citizens and local communities to voice their environmental concerns and issues,” wrote Allard and the other Senators.

The legislation expands the duties of the Ombudsman to include helping people resolve problems with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to conduct investigations into such problems. It also reauthorizes appropriations for the Ombudsman through FY 2010.

In 1998, Allard was successful in getting an Ombudsman appointed to investigate the EPA decision to leave radioactive waste buried at the site of the former Shattuck Chemical Company located in southwest Denver. The Ombudsman’s report concluded that the waste at the site should be removed and relocated to a ‘licensed facility.’ In November, 1999 the EPA agreed to reopen the Record of Decision (ROD) in order to begin the process of having the waste removed from the site.

“The Office of the Ombudsman of the EPA was instrumental in determining the chemical waste needed to be removed out of Overland Park neighborhood when questions arose,” added Allard. “The rest of this Country’s neighborhoods should have access to an independent Ombudsman when similar issues arise.”

Joining Allard in signing the letter to Chairman Jeffords were: Michael Crapo (R-ID), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Thomas Carper (D-DE).

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