

## **MEDIA INFORMATION**



**Congresswoman**

**Sheila Jackson Lee**

**18th District - Texas**

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### **CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE IN SUPPORT OF THE CHEMICAL FACILITY ANTI-TERRORISM ACT OF 2008**

**Washington, DC** – Today, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Chairwoman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, released the following statement regarding the mark-up of the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008:

“The Nation’s chemical facilities represent a terrorist target that must be protected. It is my hope that this Act will improve upon the current legislation, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security to regulate security practices at the Nation’s chemical facilities. Chemical facilities are a known terrorist target and must be protected. In 2007, the Committee on Homeland Security held several hearings, marked up, and reported on H.R. 5695; however, this legislation did not become law.

“In 1994, the accidental release of 40 tons of methyl isocyanate from a chemical in Bhopal, India initially killed 3, 000 people; 15,000 more died from the result of related illness since the accident. A similar situation could result from the intentional release by terrorists. There are more than 100 chemical plants - in backyards all across the United States - where a catastrophic accident or an act of sabotage by terrorists could endanger more than a million people. One plant in Chicago could affect almost three million people, and in California, the chemicals at one site have the potential to kill, injure or displace more than eight million people.

“Secretary Chertoff has recognized the need for regulatory authority for chemical facility security. Therefore, under the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008, the Secretary is required to maintain a list of “significant chemical facilities” which have more than threshold quantities of “substance of concern” or that meet specific criteria. Facilities will be required under the regulations to notify the Secretary if there is any change in the threshold amount of substance of concern.

“Whereas this bill makes a stronger promotion of lowering off site consequences, requires employee training, protects against Whistleblowers and illegitimate use of background checks, it does not change the function of the CFATS regulation.

“The reality is that certain industries are more vulnerable to domestic threats. We must explore any measure – including the possibility of using inherently safer technology – to better protect us from uncertainty. This bill will aid in this area. I hope to work with all businesses to ensure that this initiative improves security and emergency response plans at each chemical facility.

“Over the past few years, security measures have been revamped in shipping ports, air travel and government buildings - chemical plants should be treated no differently. In the post-September 11th world, the role of government in protecting its people has never been more important. This bill empowers citizens of this country to help protect the homeland, not restrict them from doing so.”

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