



March 1, 2011

Dear Special Committee on Nanotechnology:

We are writing in regards to the proposed nanotechnology legislation to be discussed on March 2, 2011: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lc/committees/study/2010/NANO/index.html>.

We ask that representatives from organized labor, as well as organized citizen groups, be included as members of the “Nanotechnology Council” and “Information Hub” proposed in the draft legislation. Our letter of Dec. 5, 2010 pointed out the problematic omission of these groups, as well as the troubling change in the directive for this committee—from the original mission centered on protecting environmental and public health and safety, to the promotion of nanotechnology: [http://www.nanoceo.net/files/NanoCEO\\_comments\\_on%20Nov.\\_30\\_ACT.pdf](http://www.nanoceo.net/files/NanoCEO_comments_on%20Nov._30_ACT.pdf).

We find it highly disturbing that while WI Republican leaders are proposing significant funding cuts for public workers, education, health care, and environmental protection, and taking away the rights of labor unions to have a voice in negotiating workplace conditions (including health and safety), they are proposing legislation to promote an industry that is already well-funded and supported by the federal government, nearly every Fortune 500 corporation (including Koch Industries) and, in Wisconsin, WARF, and WiSys. At the same time, the committee appears to have rejected the original idea of a state nanotechnology registry without even considering it. A registry would cost relatively little—it could be developed mostly using existing government and university staff and resources—and yet it would go a long way in helping government agencies better protect public, worker and environmental health and provide information to the public about nanotechnology developments.

**Regardless of what legislation goes forward, it is more important than ever that representatives from labor organizations are included as equal members of any councils, decisionmaking bodies and activities proposed.** Nano-sized materials are currently being created and handled in nearly every type of industry and throughout universities and research labs in the state. A growing number of scientific studies suggest that some engineered nanomaterials can pose serious health risks and yet little is being done to inform or protect workers and researchers. For example, numerous studies suggest that some kinds of carbon nanotubes can cause effects similar to those of asbestos. Workers, among the first to be exposed to these materials, should have a place at the table in discussions about how to best protect and communicate about the potential risks.

**As we have articulated extensively in previous documents to the committee, it is also critical that *organized citizen and public interest group* representatives are members of the proposed nanotechnology council, and that mechanisms for engaging the public more broadly in discussions**

about nanotechnology developments be incorporated into the legislation. Numerous consumer products with engineered nanomaterials, including several types that studies suggest can be toxic to humans and/or the environment, are already on the market; people are using them in their homes and on their bodies, as well as ingesting them in food and water, on a regular basis. The environmental and public health impacts of nanotechnologies will affect everyone directly and indirectly over the long term as these materials are released from homes and into air, water, soil, and wastes.

**In this light, we again ask that:**

1. Representatives from *organized labor* be included on the Nanotechnology Council and Information Hub;
2. Representatives from *organized citizen and public interest groups* be included on the Nanotechnology Council and Information Hub
3. Any proposed legislation include mechanisms for meaningfully engaging organized citizens groups, labor organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the broader public in decisionmaking about nanotechnology developments in Wisconsin.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Maria Powell, PhD  
Lead Community-Based Participatory Organizer & Researcher  
Nanotechnology Citizen Engagement Organization (NanoCEO)  
Midwest Environmental Justice Organization (MEJO)  
Madison, WI 53704  
phone: 608-240-1485  
email: [mariapowell@nanoceo.net](mailto:mariapowell@nanoceo.net)  
websites: [www.nanoceo.net](http://www.nanoceo.net), [www.mejo.us](http://www.mejo.us)

**The Nanotechnology Citizen Engagement Organization Board of Directors**

Kirsten Johnson, President  
Erin Loiselle, Vice President  
Cassandra Garcia, Secretary  
Morgan Sharpe, Treasurer  
Jim Powell, Administrator

**NanoCEO Community-Based Organizers & Researchers**

Mathilde Colin  
Lynette Jandl  
Carey Wegener  
Ryan Wagner  
Kurt Gutknecht

**NanoCEO members at large**

## **National and International Supporters of NanoCEO's recommendations**

Steve Suppan  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Minneapolis, MN

Beth Burrows  
President/Director  
Edmonds Institute  
2039-92nd Avenue West  
Edmonds, Washington 98020

Richard Worthington  
Loka Institute  
Washington DC

Jaydee Hanson  
Policy Director  
International Center for Technology Assessment  
Washington DC

Paulo Roberto Martins  
Brazilian Research Network in Nanotechnology, Society and Environment  
Brazil

Georgia Miller  
Friends of the Earth  
Australia

**And more to come...**