

SITUATIONS LIKE TIMES BEACH, MISSOURI AND LOVE CANAL ARE NOT UNIQUE. THERE ARE UNKNOWN NUMBERS OF VICTIMS THAT COULD BE HELPED BY THIS BILL. IN MY DISTRICT, IN WOBURN, MASS., FAMILIES HAVE EXPERIENCED AN ABNORMALLY HIGH INCIDENCE OF LEUKEMIA AND OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS, WHICH MANY SUSPECT ARE RELATED TO A HAZARDOUS WASTE SITE THERE.

THIS LEGISLATION IS MODELED -- WITH SOME CHANGES -- AFTER A PROPOSAL RESULTING FROM A THOROUGH STUDY OF VICTIM COMPENSATION MANDATED IN THE 1980 SUPERFUND LAW.

WE HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID OPENING THE FLOODGATES TO ILLEGITIMATE CLAIMS. A PERSON MUST PROVE THAT EXPOSURE TO A HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE CAUSED OR SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO HIS ILLNESS. ALSO, THERE IS PROTECTION FOR THE DEFENDANTS IN THAT THEY CAN BRING SEPARATE ACTIONS AGAINST OTHER RESPONSIBLE PARTIES TO RECOVER DAMAGES PAID OUT. AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE EASED THE STRICT RULES THAT HAVE PREVENTED VICTIMS FROM RECOVERING IN COURT UNDER EXISTING LAWS.

THIS BILL WILL GIVE VICTIMS OF THE LONG-IRRESPONSIBLE HANDLING OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES SOMEWHERE TO TURN. I AM CONFIDENT MY COLLEAGUES IN THE HOUSE WILL SUPPORT THIS MUCH-NEEDED LEGISLATION.