



## INVESTING IN AMERICA – SUPERFUND CLEAN UP

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### **THE SUPERFUND REINVESTMENT ACT**

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The Superfund program was enacted in 1980 to provide money to clean up toxic waste sites where the responsible party was out of business or could not be identified. Before they expired in 1995, the money for Superfund cleanup came from taxes on the polluters themselves. However, Congress has never reauthorized the tax, making the burden of funding cleanups of toxic waste sites fall on the shoulders of taxpaying Americans. It is time to make public health, not protection for polluters, a priority.

**Background:** Superfund sites are some of the most contaminated in the nation. 70 million Americans—including 10 million children, live within four miles of a Superfund site. They are exposed to toxic waste such as arsenic, benzene, PCBs, mercury and a range of solvents, leading to health problems such as infertility, low birth weight, birth defects, leukemia and respiratory difficulties. Communities home to these sites can face restrictions on water use and recreational activities as well as economic losses as property values decline due to contaminated land.

Before 1995, the Superfund trust fund was subsidized by taxes on the chemical and petroleum industry. When a large pollution problem occurred, and the responsible party could not be found, could not pay, or refused to pay, the Superfund was tapped to pay for the cleanup. This program has resulted in the cleanup of more than 1000 toxic waste sites in communities all over the U.S., freeing residents from health risks and fears that come with living next to toxic waste.

**The Current Problem:** Because Congress has not reauthorized the taxes, the cleanup of Superfund sites is paid for out of the general treasury. Without the contributing taxes, the Superfund has had less money available for cleanup work. This is happening as costs for work to restore Superfund sites are on the rise. In some cases, the EPA no longer has enough money to launch cleanups and can lose leverage to make companies clean up polluted sites.

### **Reauthorizing the Superfund Tax – The Specifics:**

The Superfund Reinvestment Act would reinstate the Superfund taxes on polluters to their previous levels. This includes excise taxes of 9.7 cents per barrel on crude oil or refined oil products, excise taxes of \$0.22 to \$4.87 per ton on certain chemicals, and a corporate income tax of 0.12 percent on the amount of a corporation's modified alternative minimum taxable income that exceeds \$2 million. The President's FY 2012 budget, which calls for reauthorization of these taxes, estimates that they would raise about \$2 billion per year and \$20.8 billion over 10 years.

### **Why Should the Superfund Tax be Reinstated?**

- Companies should pay to clean up their own waste.
- It is unfair to pass the burden onto taxpayers, who bear no responsibility.
- Without reauthorization, millions of Americans will be needlessly exposed to toxic waste while industries escape billions of dollars in pollution taxes.
- It's time to put the burden back where it belongs: on polluters.