

**Testimony to
The Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials**

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Group. (SSFL CAG)**

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Hello my name is John Luker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I'm the Vice President of the Santa Susana Mountain Park Association, an advocacy group that has been one of the community leaders in preserving open space and creating parkland in the Simi Hills where the Santa Susana Field Laboratory is located. We have been very active for over 40 years and our goal is to preserve from development, over 15,000 acres in private hands in those local mountains. I am also the Communications Chair of the SSFL Community Advisory Group. The views I express today are not necessarily the policies or views of those groups, they are the opinions I've developed after a decade of activism, working on this project.

The day I met Debbie Raphael, Past Director of DTSC, she said she had been charged by the Governor to remove politics from the SSFL investigation. That was 2 years ago. I come to you today, sadly, to ask your help in trying to achieve that same goal. The most toxic thing about SSFL is the politics associated with this investigation.

Creating a truly "independent" advocate for communities like ours, that are at risk from continuing and legacy pollution and contamination is a minefield. In the investigation surrounding SSFL, our community is split. One group is politically connected to legislators and special interests that have a political and financial agenda in the outcome of this clean up. I was part of that group at one time, but when I started questioning the information I was being given, when I saw contradictory data that brought me to believe the direction we were going was wrong, I was isolated, vilified and I found myself the target of a biased and clearly partisan investigation that has now caught the attention of the press and this legislative body.

Accountability is the most serious issue you will face when you craft legislation that you feel will "fix" the Department of Toxic Substances Control. Who watches the watchdogs? Who can I turn to for truthful, accurate information? When I ask the special interest groups for documentation of some of the most outrageous claims that are being made about SSFL, I either receive silence or I am attacked publicly for harassment. How are these groups financed? Who is on the payroll? What are the roles of the politicians who support those groups and insulate them from scrutiny? These are the questions I am asking now. How has money and influence dictated decisions made by regulators? How can regulatory agencies like DTSC be insulated from political interference?

Again I ask, Who watches the watchdogs? They appear to be above criticism and scrutiny.

The special interests have cost the taxpayers of this state tens of millions of dollars in legal fees and they've set up obstacles to the objective investigation of this site. I sincerely doubt that at this rate that SSFL will ever be cleaned up. It's wrong!

I believe this legislative body can solve those, almost intractable problems. Resources and budgets have been cut in critical agencies government-wide. DTSC is one of those agencies that has trouble retaining qualified and motivated experts, and they are challenged to do the job they have been mandated with the limited resources at hand. I would hate to see a new process instituted with "Independent" special interests, instead of fixing a process that is well established and would work if the agencies are given the resources to do their jobs.

I don't want to just clean up the SSFL, I want to fix it! As I want to fix the DTSC. I ask you for your help.

Thank You for your time.