

Unreasonable Risk in the Political System:
Implementation of the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976

by

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ABSTRACT

Balancing the economic and social benefits of the products of the chemical industry with the risk of environmental and human health effects is a problem without clear answers, and is subject to uncertainty and conflicting preferences. Over the last twenty years, the U.S. government has enacted and implemented several Acts to address this problem, including the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976. However, implementation and Congressional oversight has often avoided resolving fundamental issues necessary to achieve the goals of these Acts. A historical analysis of these Acts and a review of the applicable political science literature suggests reasons for this failure and recommendations for future action.