

Dr. Ruth Billings gives testimony before U.S. Senate

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Ruth Billings, Ph.D., associate professor of surgery and pharmacology at the University of Nevada School of Medicine, appeared last week before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Toxic Substances, Environmental Oversight, Research and Development, which is chaired by Sen. Harry Reid.

The committee was reviewing a report released by the Office of Technology Assessment on "Neurotoxicity: Identifying and Controlling Poisons of the Nervous System."

In her testimony, Dr. Billings told the subcommittee that of the 65,000 chemicals in the inventory of the Environmental Protection Agency, fewer than one percent have had detailed toxicological risk assessment. Unfortunately, it costs approximately \$1 million to test each chemical, making widespread testing impractical. What Dr. Billings suggested is that more basic knowledge and basic research is needed to devise simpler tests that will bring down those costs.

She also pointed out that, at a time when this basic research is increasingly important, the National Institutes of Health funding to support basic research is decreasing.