**The Claims defining the invention are as follows:**

1. A process for preparing a bridged alkaline earth metal alkylphenate, comprising reacting:

(a) a 4-alkylphenol, unsubstituted at the *ortho* positions,

(b) an alkaline earth metal oxide or hydroxide,

(c) a bridging agent comprising sulfur or a carbonyl compound of 1 to about 6 carbon atoms, and

(d) a 2,6-dialkylphenol;

wherein the amount of the 2,6-dialkylphenol is about 0.05 to about 3 moles per 1 mole of the 4-alkylphenol; provided that if there is a molar excess of the 2,6-dialkylphenol, then such excess is added after initial reaction of the 4-alkylphenol with alkaline earth oxide or hydroxide, the bridging agent, and no more than 1 mole of the 2,6-dialkylphenol per mole of the 4-alkylphenol.

2. The process of Claim 1, wherein the 4-alkylphenol is 4-dodecylphenol.

3. The process of Claim 1, wherein the alkaline earth metal oxide or hydroxide is calcium hydroxide.

4. The process of Claim 1, wherein the bridging agent is formaldehyde.

5. The process of Claim 1, wherein the bridging agent is sulfur.

6. The process of Claim 1, wherein the 2,6-dialkylphenol is 2,6-di-t-butylphenol.

7. The process of Claim 1, wherein the amount of the 2,6-dialkylphenol is about 0.15 to about 0.5 moles per 1 mole of the 4-alkylphenol.

8. The process of Claim 1, wherein the amount of the bridging compound is about 0.8 to about 4 moles per 1 mole of the 4-alkylphenol and wherein the amount of the alkaline earth metal oxide or hydroxide is about 0.1 to about 4 moles per 1 mole of the 4-alkylphenol.

9. The process of Claim 1, wherein the components (a) through (d) are reacted at about 150 °C to about 230 °C for about 2 to about 10 hours.

10. The process of Claim 1, wherein the 4-alkylphenol is reacted with at least a portion of the alkaline earth metal oxide or hydroxide and at least a portion of the bridging agent prior to addition of the 2,6-dialkylphenol.

11. The process of Claim 10, wherein, in a first step, about 0.1 to about 0.4 moles of calcium hydroxide and about 1 to about 3 moles of sulfur (as $S_1$), per mole of the 4-alkylphenol, are reacted with the 4-alkylphenol at about 170 to about 230 °C for about 3 to about 7 hours, and thereafter about 0.05 to about 0.5 moles of additional calcium hydroxide, about 0.25 to about 0.8 moles of additional sulfur, and about 0.15 to about 0.5 moles of the 2,6-dialkylphenol, per mole of the 4-alkylphenol, are added and reacted at about 150 to about 230 °C for about 1 to about 5 hours.

12. The process of Claim 1, wherein the reaction is conducted in the presence of a solvent.

13. The process of Claim 1, wherein the product of the reaction is subsequently treated with a molar excess of alkaline earth metal oxide or hydroxide and with carbon dioxide, thereby providing an overbased detergent.

14. The process of Claim 1, wherein the product of the reaction is subjected to vacuum stripping.

15. The process of Claim 1, wherein the amount of the 2,6-dialkylphenol is about 0.15 to 1 mole per mole of the 4-alkylphenol.

16. The process of Claim 15, wherein the bridging agent is sulphur.