

February 21, 2012

Alaska State Senate Finance Committee  
Room 520  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Alaska State Senate Finance Committee Members:

We would like to express our opposition to SB 27. The EPA and industry have already reached an agreement to phase out old fire retardant products and safely transition to the next generation of fire safety products. As burn physicians and former presidents of the American Burn Association, we have come to recognize the absolute necessity of flame retardants. The truth is that fire retardants save lives. They add minutes to a would-be victim's escape time. The relationship between time of exposure and the extent of the injury is well known. The greater the surface area burns, the higher the mortality. We are committed to saving lives and preventing burns any way possible. Thus we are deeply concerned about any reckless and unscientific attempt to weaken standards and put millions of people at risk for serious burn injuries and death. Any individual state bill that would immediately ban fire safety protections without the development and proper implementation of alternatives is dangerous.


Devastating fires affect every person in every industry. According to a recent UC Davis study, some 2 million fires occur each year in the United States alone. These fires result in about 5,000 deaths, 54,000 hospitalizations and 1.4 million injuries, including 300 to 400 child deaths. The medical community sees the trauma of burns and the lifelong effect on the lives of victims on a daily basis. The brave firefighters and EMT's that are the first to respond to a scene depend on flame retardants to allow valuable seconds for rescue. The business community will be forced to change their manufacturing process and will incur much higher costs, leading smaller enterprises to bankruptcy. Universities and school systems will face a significantly larger risk for hundreds of thousands of students. Industries simply cannot afford to ban a life-saving product without developing alternatives.

The EPA agreement sets forth a rational, effective transition to newer alternatives, while allowing critical services such as police, fire and airlines to continue to use existing fire safety products that are critically important to saving lives. Manufacturers have already announced the production of environmentally-friendly fire retardants which minimize the use of raw materials, energy, byproducts and waste. We believe that fire safety manufacturers will hold fast to their decision to safely phase out existing products, and we commend them for their proactive development of new technologies.

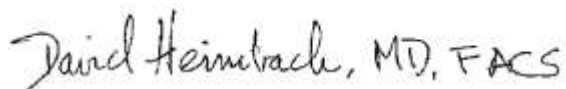
As we make this transition, we must ensure that there is no unsafe lapse in fire protection. Therefore, we oppose any preemptive state bans as we believe the timeline that has been worked out with the EPA is the most appropriate. A national solution considers the interest of all Americans rather than just those of individual states, and this is the only way to safely progress in national fire protection.

Thank you for your time and effort concerning this extremely important matter, and we hope that you will join us as we continue to hold our nation to the highest fire protection standard.

Sincerely,



Roger E. Salisbury, MD  
Westchester Medical Center  
Taylor Care Center Executive Offices- Rm 139  
Valhalla, NY 10595



Past President American Burn Association

Past President International Society for Burn Injury



Alan Dimick, M.D., FACS

Past President, American Burn Association