

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Committee

House Finance Subcommittee on
the Department of Law

REPRESENTATIVE LINDSEY HOLMES

HB 63

SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 63 will end the use of polybrominated fire retardants (PBDEs) in mattresses, upholstered furniture and the plastic housing of electronics in Alaska. In addition, it will give the Department of Environmental Conservation the authority to prohibit the use of other toxic flame retardants when safer alternatives exist. It will also allow the Department to participate with other states in learning about and sharing information on toxins.

PBDEs are persistent toxins that are included in household furniture and electronics to enhance flame retardancy. These toxins bio-accumulate, becoming more concentrated in humans and animals high in the food chain. Fetuses and infants are at particular risk as accumulated toxins are transferred from mother to child in utero and through breast milk. Pre-natal exposure may have lifelong health impacts that are not manifested until decades later.

Alaskans are particularly vulnerable for three reasons: 1) we spend a lot of winter indoors with little ventilation, increasing our exposure to and ingestion of the microscopic particles of toxins found in household dust that are released from our furniture and electronics; 2) we eat subsistence foods that may concentrate toxins; and 3) through a process known as global distillation, toxins such as PBDEs are carried in the atmosphere for great distances from points of manufacture and concentrate in cold climates.

This is the opportunity for Alaska to join 12 other states and take action against these harmful household toxins.