

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

House Bill 27

“Toxic-Free Firefighters and Children Act”

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 27, known as the “Toxic-Free Firefighters and Children Act,” would make it illegal to manufacture, sell, or distribute new products in Alaska with certain flame-retardant chemicals. The bill also requires manufactures to label products made with flame retardant chemicals.

Many of the chemicals used to make products less flammable become toxic when they burn. Exposing firefighters to these cancer-causing chemicals puts them at undue risk, especially because there are now safer alternatives available for manufacturers to use that don’t risk people lives. Furthermore, children across Alaska are at risk because many children’s products are made with these cancer-causing chemicals.

In 2017, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) called on manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers, and consumers to avoid children’s products, electronics, mattresses, and home furniture that contain organohalogen flame retardants, which are a class of chemicals associated with serious human health problems.

Additionally, the International Association of Fire Fighters is calling for reform due to occupational-related cancers, which now account for more than half of their members' line-of-duty deaths each year. The Association contends these cancer-causing chemicals are the largest health-related issue facing the firefighting profession.

After an Anchorage firefighter, Andy Mullen, recently lost a battle to cancer caused by exposure to toxins, U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski was one of the original cosponsors of the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act, which was signed into law last year. It creates a national registry for firefighters diagnosed with cancer and directs the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to study the relationship between career-long exposure to dangerous toxins and the frequency of cancer in firefighters.

Currently, Maine and Rhode Island prohibit certain flame-retardant chemicals and just last year then California Governor Jerry Brown signed a law banning dangerous flame retardants. These and other prohibitions have put pressure on manufacturers to embrace alternatives and produce products without the use of dangerous flame retardants.

House Bill 27 would save lives of Alaskans without putting an extra burden on manufactures, as they are already being forced, by laws passed by other more populous states, to produce products without dangerous flame retardants.