

Representative Lindsey Holmes
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

February 18, 2011

Dear Representative Holmes:

I am writing to you in support of HB 63, which would ban polybrominated fire retardants in consumer products, while giving the Department of Environmental Conservation additional powers and encouraging cooperation with other states in such activities. Rather than elaborating on the rationale for this legislation, which is effectively presented in your sponsor statement, I'll describe the issue of PBDE toxicity as it relates to the burn injury community. This is in order because the brominated flame retardant (BFR) chemical industry often seeks our support when their products are challenged by such legislation.

I support HB 63 in my role as a founding director (in 1985) and emeritus Board member of the Federation of Burn Foundations (FBF), and as a former major committee chair, honoree (twice) and member of the Board of Trustees of the American Burn Association (ABA).

It is understandable that anyone who treats severely burned patients or works closely with both care providers and survivors, as I have for 35 years, would be inclined to support any action which might save a life or prevent such an injury. That was my own position until four years ago, when I first became aware of the increasing public health and environmental threat posed by the accumulating presence of toxic flame retardant chemicals in the environment and human tissue, --along with the lack of any data supporting their effectiveness. Many of us in the ABA share such concerns.

I have also felt a special responsibility to monitor fire and burn injury statistics, as the ABA member trusted with updating the Association's annual burn incidence fact sheet. In tracking the steady decline in fire and burn death and injury over the past 30 years, I have noted the many reasons for those trends. These include numerous safety efforts, such as smoke alarms, more public education, stronger building codes and safer designs of cigarettes, cigarette lighters and candles. Unlike PBDEs, none of these influences on fire casualties have negative side effects, and they have had a far greater positive impact than any that can be claimed for these chemicals.

Other recent changes in society which are not motivated by fire safety have also helped reduce fire casualties. These include the major decline in smoking, the transition in cooking from the stove to the microwave and our growing reliance on restaurants and fast food outlets.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage support for HB 63 in this session of your legislature.

Sincerely,

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