

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI

SB 111 SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 111 will limit the use of polybrominated flame retardants (PBDEs) in products such as mattresses, upholstered furniture, and other textiles.

PBDEs are toxic flame retardants added to certain manufactured products. While fire retardancy is important, some flame retardants used in electronics and other products, such as PBDEs, are leaving a lasting toxic legacy in human beings and the environment.

Laboratory studies show that PBDEs are harmful to people, especially children. PBDEs have been found in the sediment of remote Alaskan lakes, fish, marine mammals, air, polar bears, birds, and sea otters. High PBDE levels found in Yupik mothers living in the Yukon Kuskokwim River Delta are a cause for concern because there is evidence that PBDEs can be passed to their children *in utero* and in breast milk. Further studies of PBDEs have revealed little to no benefit for consumers during a fire, making this toxic chemical useless at best.

Over fifty million pounds of PBDEs continue to be built into TVs, mattresses, and other products annually in North America, even though it is a developmental toxin and possible carcinogen. Safer alternatives exist for PBDEs and 4 states have enacted legislation banning all types of PBDEs, while 12 other states have proposed similar legislation.

Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New York and Rhode Island require manufacturers of certain electronic products to notify the state if their products exceed certain maximum concentration values for PBDEs. Minnesota requires that PBDE-free equipment, supplies and products be made available for purchase and use by state agencies. Two states--New York and California--have laws regarding TRIS in children's products.

In 2012, Dr. David Heimbach from the well-respected Seattle Burn Center testified to the House Health and Social Services Committee in opposition to this very same bill. Only a few months later, the Chicago Tribune ran a six day, front page spread calling out Dr. Heimbach for his false testimony not only in Alaska, but across the country, which was paid for almost entirely by the flame retardant industry. His false testimony, along with intense lobbying efforts by industry have frustrated lawmakers around the country attempting to block these poisonous chemicals.

I believe now is the time to act on this important legislation and ask for your support.

