



# ALASKA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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January 24, 2016

To: Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Alaska Legislature

RE: The Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Associations' position on PBDE's

Dear Legislator –

The Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Association (AKPFFA) is submitting this letter in support of HB199 / SB111 and urges passage of this important public health and environmental measure. We believe passage of this measure is a step in the right direction for improving the health and safety of our firefighters and the community.

Our organization represents 7 affiliated local fire fighter unions and more than 480 affiliated members' of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). We are concerned with providing the safest working environment for our firefighters, and the need to maintain the highest safety standards; a big step towards achieving these goals can be made by banning the use of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE's).

The elimination of PBDE's is not about compromising fire standards. A fire safety committee comprised of fire professionals will review alternatives identified by the Department of Ecology and the Department of Health as "safer", ensuring that any alternative will meet the same fire standards. This bill is about protecting firefighters and others exposed to these chemicals from the potentially dangerous health implications. Unlike other flame retardants, when PBDE's burn they release dense fumes and black smoke that reduce visibility and a highly corrosive gas known as hydrogen bromide. Many studies involving firefighter's exposure from these chemicals penetrating protective gear have found that firefighters have a much greater risk of contracting cancer, heart and lung disease, and other debilitating diseases. While we clearly support the use of flame retardant chemicals, there are alternatives already in use that do not contain bromine or chlorine making it safer for firefighters than those that contain PBDE's.

Major manufacturing corporations like Dell, Hewlett-Packard, and IKEA have already moved away from the use of PBDE's in their products. These industry leaders are demonstrating that alternative flame retardant technologies for achieving fire safety standards do exist and are readily available for other manufactured products.

The AKPFFA joins the Alaska State Fire Chiefs Association and the IAFF along with numerous health and environmental groups in supporting this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Wescott".

Tom Wescott

President AKPFFA

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