

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives

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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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State Legislature Votes Toxics Out of North Carolina Schools

Children in North Carolina will soon gain strong protections from pesticides, mercury, diesel fumes, arsenic-treated wood, mold and mildew at North Carolina's public schools. A new bill, the "School Children's Health Act" (H1502) has passed the House and Senate and has been sent to the Governor, who is expected to sign it. The bill uses common-sense, low-cost, and cost-saving measures to reduce student and staff exposure to hazardous contaminants in school buildings.

The bill was sponsored by Representatives Grier Martin (D-Wake), Marian McLawhorn (D-Pitt) and Marvin Lucas (D-Cumberland). Senator Bill Purcell (D-Scotland) presented the bill in the Senate. "It's just common sense," stated Representative Martin. "You don't want toxic chemicals in school buildings that can harm kids' health and make it harder for them to learn. It just so happens that we can reduce the risks from these hazards in a way that's straightforward and cost-effective, too."

Pediatrician Debbie Leiner, a member of the North Carolina Pediatric Society, agrees. "There is growing scientific evidence that exposure to these common contaminants can increase children's risk for many kinds of disease, including respiratory illness, learning difficulties and in some cases even cancer. From a medical perspective, this bill makes good sense – to prevent serious illness in the first place by making schools safer for kids," Dr. Leiner said.

Beginning this fall, schools will have to reduce students' exposures to diesel fumes from idling engines, seal up or plan to eliminate arsenic-treated wood on playground equipment, make sure

there is no elemental mercury in their science classrooms, and start managing pests with Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Schools will have five years to fully implement the new IPM programs, but many districts around the state are already using it, and have reported cost savings from it.

"The legislature has done a great job with this bill of taking a safety-first approach with schools," stated Fawn Pattison, Executive Director of the Agricultural Resources Center, a group that advocates for School IPM. "The old-fashioned way of doing things was to ask, 'how much of this chemical can we use before we hurt somebody?' Schools now are getting smarter about asking instead why we would want to have hazardous toxics around kids in the first place. I think that's real progress."

The bill was strongly endorsed by the NC Pediatric Society, Agricultural Resources Center, Conservation Council of NC, Action for Children NC, the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, and the Chairman of the State Board of Education, Howard Lee.

Senator Jeffords Introduces Bipartisan Green Building Legislation

Senator Jim Jeffords (I-VT) has revised and reintroduced the "High-Performance Green Building Act of 2006." The bill, also known as S.64, authorizes the use of \$50 million dollars over five years to encourage the development and use of energy-efficient, environmentally sound, and safe green buildings. A bipartisan bill, S.64 is cosponsored by Senators Snowe (R-ME), Lautenberg (D-NJ), Chafee (R-RI), Boxer (D-CA), Feinstein (D-CA), Clinton (D-NJ), Lieberman (D-CT) and Obama (D-IL).

The bipartisan legislation is intended to expand federal green building initiatives and lead to healthier, more efficient schools and buildings, requiring the federal government to establish green building standards for all federal facilities. The legislation also seeks to improve federal coordination and leadership related to the use of green buildings, expand research and development of green building technology, increase in public outreach regarding green building activities (both inside and outside of the federal government), review the current budget structure and approval process for government projects, and encourage schools to improve the environmental conditions of their facilities.

According to *the Building Momentum: National Trends and Prospects for High-Performance Green Buildings*, a report coordinated and prepared by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, on which Senator Jeffords serves as Ranking Member, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 40 percent of the nation's 115,000 schools suffer from poor environmental condi-

continued on page 2



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EPA Completes Pesticide Reviews Aimed at Protecting Children, But Groups Say the System Is Broken

August 3, 2006 marked the congressionally mandated deadline for reviewing the safety of thousands of widely used pesticide products, from home lawn weed killers to insecticides used in food production, and environmental and health groups are calling the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) process a public health and environmental failure. The *Food Quality Protection Act* (FQPA) of 1996 required EPA to review and reregister food use pesticides and reassess tolerances, the amount of residues that are allowed on food, with children's unique vulnerability in mind. On the tenth anniversary of FQPA enactment, EPA completed over 99%, or 9,637 of the 9,721 tolerance reassessment decisions. The process has resulted in the cancellation of nearly 4,400 individual pesticide end-use product registrations out of a current universe of 17,592.

Despite the agency's progress, environmental and public health advocates believe that the system EPA uses

to evaluate pesticides is flawed, and therefore many harmful pesticides are still on the market. Beyond Pesticides identifies a series of deficiencies in EPA's review of pesticides, calling into question the safety of commonly used products. The following are a sample. More information is available online at www.beyondpesticides.org/watchdog/FQPA.

- **Less and non-toxic strategies ignored:** The current system assumes that if a pesticide meets a highly questionable "acceptable" risk threshold, it has value or benefit, even though there are typically less or non-toxic methods available.
- **Inconsistent definition of "reasonable" risk:** The interpretation of "reasonable" risk varies. EPA sometimes allows a cancer risk, for example, of one in a million and other times accepts one in 10,000.
- **Disproportionate risk:** EPA fails to take into account the numerous cir-

cumstances and realities that make some population groups more vulnerable to daily pesticide exposures – including children, farmworkers and their families, the elderly, those with compromised immune systems, and those living in poverty.

- **Pesticide synergy:** Research shows that combinations with pesticides and other chemicals, including medications, multiply the toxic effects of individual chemicals and create new adverse impacts not seen in either chemical alone.
- **Endocrine disruption:** EPA does not currently evaluate or consider the endocrine disrupting properties of pesticides. Endocrine disruptors are mistaken for hormones by the body and thus may alter the function of hormones, causing infertility, malformed sexual organs, and cancer of sensitive organs.

continued from page 1

tions. For example, these conditions include: exposure to pesticides, cleaning agents, building materials, and molds, leaking roofs, poor heating and ventilation systems, and failing plumbing. Conditions such as these may compromise the health,

safety, and learning of the more than 14 million students attending these schools.

High-performance and green buildings can improve student health and academic performance and reduce student and teacher absenteeism. If passed, this bill would implement high-perfor-

mance and green building methods on a national scale and protect the health of our nations children, workers, and schoolteachers.

Take Action! Contact your U.S. Senators at www.senate.gov and request that he/she support the Green Building Act of 2006.