

School Environment Protection Campaign

Building the movement behind the School Environment Protection Act (SEPA)

Momentum behind the *School Environment Protection Act* (SEPA) continues to build. This federal bill, S.1716 and H.R. 3275, creates national standards to protect children and school staff from pesticides used at their schools. SEPA establishes a process that creates incentives for schools to use pest management practices that do not rely on toxic pesticides. Under the bill, if toxic pesticides are used in a school, parents, guardians, and staff will receive advance notice of use and information on product hazards. SEPA gives greater national prominence to the issue of students and teachers and the hazards of pesticides and provides an opportunity to educate on the availability of alternative practices that are not reliant on dangerous chemicals.

Since SEPA's (S.1716) introduction by Senators Robert Torricelli (NJ) and Patty Murray (OR) in the U.S. Senate, Senator Joseph Lieberman (CT) signed on with the release of his General Accounting Office (GAO) report, *Pesticides: Use, Effects, and Alternatives to Pesticides in Schools* (see following article). In the Senate, SEPA has been referred to the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.

Since SEPA's (H.R.3275) introduction by Representative Rush Holt (NJ) in the U.S. House of Representatives, Representatives Barrett (WI), Capuano (MA), Conyers (MI), DeLauro (CT), Forbes (NY), Gutierrez (IL), Hoeffel (PA), Kucinich (OH), Larson (CT), McCarthy (NY), Millender-McDonald (CA), Miller (CA), Moran (VA), Slaughter (NY), Udall (CO), and Wu (OR) have signed-on as co-sponsors of the bill. On the House side, SEPA has been referred to the House Agriculture Committee.

It is now time to ramp up Congressional support in a serious way. And one way to do this is for constituents to become involved by contacting their U.S. Senators and Representative. **Your Congressmembers need to hear from you. Otherwise, they will not know that there is a problem with pesticide use, a lack of disclosure in schools, and that alternative non-toxic approaches are effective.**

Please write, call, fax or e-mail your Congressmembers today. Request your Congressmembers co-sponsor this bill, let your Senators and Representative know how you feel about the necessity of protecting children and school staff from pesticide exposure while at school.

School Environment Protect Act (SEPA) Supporters Update:

Following is a list of organizations that have signed-on in support of SEPA since the last publication of the list in *Pesticides and You*. For a complete listing, see www.beyondpesticides.org.

Boston Women's Health Book Collective (MA)
The Breast Cancer Fund
Buckeye Environmental Network (OH)
Cancer Resource Center, University of California at San Francisco Comprehensive Cancer Center
Center for Environmental Health (CA)
Citizens' Action Committee for Change (NY)
Citizens' Environmental Coalition (NY)
Encouraging Alternatives to Chemical Hazards (NC)
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (CA)
Environmental Defense
EnviroSafe, Inc. (MI)
Generation Green (IL)
Iowa Public Interest Research Group
Indiana Public Interest Research Group
Institute for Children's Environmental Health (WA)
Minnesota Herbicide Coalition
Montana Environmental Information Center
Parents and Teachers Association of Howard County (MD)
Pesticide Action Network Asia-Pacific
Stoddard & Associates, Inc. (MI)
Texas Parents and Teachers Association
University of California, Los Angeles, Environmental Science and Engineering Program
West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. (NY)
Wildwood Natural Foods (CA)

If your organization would like to sign-on, please contact Kagan Owens, program director at Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP, kowens@beyondpesticides.org.

SAMPLE LETTER

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate (or United States House of Representatives)
Washington, DC 20510 or (Washington, DC 20515)

Dear Senator/Representative (last name):

I am concerned about the use of pesticides in schools. There are no national protections or standards regarding school pesticide use that protect children while they attend school. To correct this situation and ensure national leadership in protecting children from a daily dose of toxic chemicals in their classrooms, playgrounds and ballfields, I am writing to ask for your support of S. 1716 (or H.R. 3275), the *School Environment Protection Act* (SEPA) and request that you sign on as a co-sponsor of the bill.

I am especially concerned about this issue because young children spend so much time in schools that are treated with pesticides during their developmental years. Children are especially sensitive to pesticide exposures as they take in more pesticides relative to their body weight than adults and have developing organ systems that are more vulnerable and less able to detoxify toxic chemicals. Even at low levels, exposure to pesticides can cause serious adverse health effects. Numerous studies document that children exposed to pesticides suffer elevated rates of childhood leukemia, soft tissue sarcoma and brain cancer. Studies also link pesticides to childhood asthma, respiratory problems, and in inability to concentrate.

S. 1716 (or H.R. 3275) is intended to set in place a process that creates incentives for schools to use pest management practices that do not rely on toxic pesticides. The tools and experience to control school pests without using toxic chemicals are available nationwide and have proven to be effective and economical. Under the bill, if toxic pesticides are used in a school, parents, guardians, and staff will receive advance notice of use and information on product hazards. The notification provisions are crucial to parent involvement.

The majority of school children in the U.S. remain unprotected. The time is right for national protection. S. 1716 (or H.R. 3275) will provide a safer and healthier environment for our children to learn. Thank you for your help in moving the *School Environment Protection Act* ahead.

Sincerely,