



School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street SE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20003
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

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Federal School Pest Management Bill Introduced in Congress

Federal legislation, the *School Environment Protection Act of 2009* (SEPA), was introduced in December 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives to protect children from toxic pesticides and pest problems with safer alternatives. The sponsors seek to end unnecessary toxic pesticide use in the nation's schools, replacing it with safer management techniques and products.

When children attend school, it is assumed that they are going to a safe environment, free of toxic chemicals that could harm them. New legislation seeks to make this assumption a reality. With the introduction of SEPA, H.R. 4159, members of Congress and public health, school employee, children's health and environmental groups are saying that it is time to stop the unnecessary use of dangerous chemicals and assist schools in the adoption of safer strategies to prevent and manage pest problems. U.S. Representative Rush Holt and 15 of his colleagues put the legislation forward with the foundation of more than a decade of state and local school pest management and pesticide use policies and on-the-ground experience from across the country.

SEPA requires that all public schools adopt integrated pest management (IPM) programs that emphasize non-chemical pest management strategies and only use defined least-toxic pesticides as a last resort. Least-toxic pesticides do not include pesticides that are carcinogens, reproductive and developmental toxicants, nervous and immune system poisons, endocrine disruptors, or have data gaps or missing information on health effects. Also excluded from the definition are outdoor pesticides that adversely affect wildlife, have high soil mobility, or are groundwater contaminants. The legislation prohibits synthetic fertilizers from being used on school grounds due to their

adverse impact on healthy soils, plants, and turf, and associated environmental impacts. A public health emergency provision allows the use of any pesticide, if warranted. In this case, if a pesticide, other than a least-toxic pesticide is used, notification of the pesticide application is required to be provided to all parents and guardians of students and school staff. Cleaning agents with pesticides fall under the bill's purview. The legislation establishes a 12-member National School IPM Advisory Board that, with the help of a technical advisory panel, will develop school IPM standards and a list of allowable least-toxic pesticide products. In addition, under the language each state is required to develop its IPM plan as part of its existing state cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

School is a place where children need a healthy body and a clear head in order to learn. Numerous scientific studies find

that pesticides typically used in schools are linked to chronic health effects such as cancer, asthma, neurological and immune system diseases, reproductive problems, and developmental and learning disabilities. Children's bodies are especially vulnerable when exposed to pesticides, even at low levels. IPM in schools has proven to be an effective and economical method of pest management that can prevent pest problems and eliminate the use of hazardous pesticides in school buildings and on school grounds.

"We applaud Rep. Holt and the cosponsors of this legislation for leading the nation on a course that recognizes that children and teachers are best served by a learning environment that does not expose them to toxic pesticides," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

For more information see: www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/sepa/.

Take Action: Help Pass This Landmark Legislation

- **Contact your U.S. Senators and U.S Representative** to request that he/she co-sponsor SEPA. (See: www.senate.gov and www.house.gov/writerep/ for their contact information. Email Beyond Pesticides and we'll also send follow-up information.)
- **Sign your organization, business, school, or office up as a supporter** of SEPA by emailing Beyond Pesticides your Name and Organization contact information. (See a list of current SEPA supporters at www.beyondpesticides.org/schools/sepa/SEPA2009supporters.pdf.)
- **Pass this information on** to your mayor, city council, local PTA and civic associations to see if they will endorse SEPA. (Email Beyond Pesticides, and we'll also send follow-up information. Please be sure to include all the necessary contact information.)
- **Submit a testimonial or statement** about what this bill means to you and any personal experience and facts regarding how IPM, such as required in SEPA, can effectively manage pest problems without toxic pesticides to Beyond Pesticides.

Please send all correspondence regarding SEPA to kowens@beyondpesticides.org.

New Study Documents Progress in State School Pesticide Laws

In a newly released report, *The Schooling of State Pesticide Laws – 2010 Update*, Beyond Pesticides finds that only 35 states have taken limited action to step in and provide protective measures to address pesticide use in, around or near their schools. Protection under state laws is uneven across the country and children in 15 states are provided no protection at all.

The report reviews state school pest management laws that attempt to create healthier learning environments and provides an analysis of our nations progress over the past decade using the following five evaluation criteria: (i) adoption of an integrated pest management (IPM) program; (ii) prohibiting when and where pesticides can be applied; (iii) requiring posting signs for indoor and outdoor pesticide applications; (iv) requiring prior written notification for pesticide use; and, (v) establishing restricted spray (buffer) zones to address chemicals drifting into school yards and school buildings. These five criteria are all the

basics not provided for under federal law and are essential ingredients to protect children from pesticides while they are at school. The degree of state activity suggests a level of concern that can and should lead to increased protection in the future.

Just barely over a decade ago, Beyond Pesticides published the first *Schooling of State Pesticide Laws* report and since that time considerable progress has been made. For example, since 1998, in the two most important areas of reform, IPM and chemical restrictions, there has been a 24 percent and 22 percent increase, respectively, in state policies.

Beyond Pesticides' 2009 survey of state laws regarding pesticide use at schools shows that:

- 21 states recommend or require schools to use IPM, a 24% increase since 1998;
- 18 states restrict when or what pesticides may be applied in schools, a 22% increase since 1998;

- 18 states require the posting of signs for indoor school pesticide applications, a 22% increase since 1998;
- 28 states require the posting of signs for pesticide applications made on school grounds, a 12% increase since 1998;
- 24 states require prior written notification to students, parents, or staff before a pesticide application is made at schools, a 30% increase since 1998; and,
- 9 states recognize the importance of controlling drift by restricting pesticide applications in areas neighboring a school, a mere 6% increase since 1998.

Take Action: Find out what your state law requirements are by reading the report at www.beyondpesticides.org/report/Schooling2010.pdf.

Where another state offers protection that is not provided in your state, advocate for it. Where policies exist, make sure that they are enforced. Both the adoption of laws and ensuring their enforcement once adopted require vigilant monitoring and public pressure.

Groups Petition EPA to Ban Non-Medical Uses of Triclosan

Environmental and health groups have petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ban the use of the widely used antimicrobial pesticide triclosan, which is linked to endocrine disruption, cancer and antibiotic resistance and found in 75% of people tested in government biomonitoring studies. Over 80 groups, lead by Beyond Pesticides and Food and Water Watch, say EPA must act to stop the use of the chemical. In their petition, the groups cite numerous statutes under which they believe the government must act to stop non-medical uses of triclosan, including laws regulating pesticide registration, use and residues, clean and safe drinking water, and endangered species.

"Given its widespread environmental contamination and public health risk, EPA has a responsibility to ban household triclosan use in a marketplace where safer alternatives are available to manage bacteria," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides.

"Scientific studies indicate that wide-

spread use of triclosan causes a number of serious health and environmental problems," said Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch. "EPA needs to ban its use in non-medical settings and stop allowing companies that market triclosan to exploit consumer fears regarding bacterial-borne illnesses."

Research indicates that widespread use of triclosan causes a number of serious health and environmental problems. Chief among these issues is resistance to antibiotic medications and bacterial cleansers, a problem for all people, but especially vulnerable populations such as infants and the elderly.

Triclosan is also a known endocrine disruptor and has been shown to affect male and female reproductive hormones, which could potentially increase the risk for cancer. Further, the pesticide can interact with other chemicals to form chloroform and breakdown to dioxin, thereby exposing consumers to even more dangerous chemicals.

Exposure to triclosan is widespread and now found in the urine of 75% of the U.S. population, according to the *Fourth National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*, published by the CDC.

Due to the fact that many products containing triclosan are washed down the drain, triclosan shows up in water systems and sewage sludge. Accumulation of the pesticide in waterways and soil has been shown to threaten ecosystems and produce hazardous residues in fish.

Regulated by both EPA and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, triclosan is commonly found in hand soaps, toothpastes, deodorants, laundry detergents, fabric softeners, facial tissues, antiseptics, fabrics, toys, and medical devices. The petition to EPA seeks expedited action by the agency to ban household triclosan use, challenging serious deficiencies in EPA's September 2008 reregistration of triclosan and its failure to comply with environmental statutes. Download the petition at: www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial/triclosan-epa-petition.pdf.