

Legislative Proposal Request Form

Title

Toxic-Free Kids and Families Act [H B 1174 15-17 Leg. Session 1] .

Sponsor(s)

AS Environmental and Sustainability Programs

Describe the issue

Everyday people are unknowingly exposed to harmful chemicals in their homes, schools and offices that have not adequately been tested for human and environmental safety. Toxic chemicals in flame retardants are commonly used on a variety of furniture and accumulate in our bodies when we breathe in surrounding air and dust. Flame retardants also enter our waterways through laundry wastewater. Exposure to these toxic chemicals through air and water have been linked to cancer, lower IQ, hormone disruption, thyroid effects and obesity in humans and have shown to inhibit reproduction, immune system response and proper hormone function in aquatic species such as salmon and osprey.

While flame retardants were created with intentions to promote safety and reduce risk of fire, recent studies have shown that flame retardants actually do little to prevent furniture from burning. Research done by the Consumer Product Safety Commission concluded that in their tests findings "We did not find flame retardants in foam to provide any significant protection." Although scientific evidence has shown that flame retardants are hazardous and ineffective, they remain in many manufacturing and supply chains due to weak laws and regulatory policy as well as strong influences from the chemical industry. The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) allows chemical manufacturers to introduce chemicals into the supply chain with little regulatory oversight or required safety testing. Meanwhile, the government has almost no authority to ban these untested and often toxic chemicals.

The Toxic-Free Kids and Families Act seeks change this and to improve human and environmental health and safety by protecting our communities from toxic chemicals with the implementation of the following actions:

- Ban six harmful flame retardants that have been designated by Washington as Chemicals of High Concern for Children.
- Give the state's toxics control agency the ability to ban cancer-causing and other harmful chemicals from being used as flame retardants.
- Ensure that safer effective alternatives are available.
- Allow for public access to information from manufacturers on what toxic flame retardants they are using.

We must end the use of dangerous, toxic chemicals and ensure chemicals used to replace them are less hazardous. In order to protect our communities, it is time we raise health and environmental standards, utilize cleaner alternatives to flame retardants and pass the Toxic-Free Kids and Families Act.

Why should Western Work on it?

Western students, staff and faculty may be unknowingly exposed to toxic chemicals in flame retardants while on campus. Furniture in the library, dorms, classrooms and lounges may jeopardize human health with little to no added safety benefits. Health and safety of all people on campus is a priority for WWU and is imperative to an academic environment that promotes success and well-being.

Recognizing the application and presence of flame retardants as a source of increased levels of toxicants entering local waterways will help fulfill the AS Environmental Center's Mission to raise environmental consciousness on campus. Taking action to support the Toxic-Free Kids and Families act

will improve discourse related to environmental stewardship, encourage environmental action and raise person-earth awareness. These are all values Western currently withholds and goals the university supports.

What is the solution?

The proposal gives authority to the appropriate government entities to apply and enforce safety standards, regulate the chemical industry and enhance public and environmental health and safety. The Toxics-Free Kids and Families Act will help to improve transparency between government, industry and the public.

What are you advocating for?

We are advocating for FIB 1174 15-17 Leg. Session, or Toxic-Free Kids and Families Act, to be passed.

Who do you have as support so far?

Leaders: Rep. Kevin Van De Wege (D-Sequim), Sen. Sharon Nelson (D-Vashon)

Along with: Reps. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Burien), David Taylor (R-Moxee), Tana Senn (D-Mercer Island) Senators Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake), Linda Parlette (R-Wenatchee), Ann Rivers (R-La Center), and Mark Miloscia (R-Federal Way).

Major state newspapers advocated for the bill to be passed in the 2015 Legislative session - The Seattle Times, The Tacoma News Tribune, The Spokesman Review, and The Olympian editorialized in favor of the bill.

A coalition of over 30 groups mobilized in Olympia to advocate for the bill.

Who needs to be moved/potential opposition?

Powerful opposition came from the chemical industry and the Washington Retail Association, the trade association for big retailers such as Fred Meyer, Costco, Target, and Walmart.

Provide any legislative background and context for the issue.

Toxics-Free Kids and Families Act passed twice through the house with a huge bipartisan majority. HR 1174 was delayed and did not come up for a vote in the Senate during session, and therefore the Senate did not have a chance to vote on it.

The 2015 Washington State Legislative Session-the longest in history- came to an end and the Legislature adjourned without passing the ban on toxic flame retardants in residential furniture and kids' products. It is up again for vote in the 2016 Legislative session.

Sources

<http://www.watoxics.org/>

<http://saferchemicals.org/>

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summarv.aspx?bill=1174&year=2015>