

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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Act Now to Curtail Children's Exposure to School Pesticides

Action Needed Before End of July to Incorporate Senate-Passed Bill in Conference Committee

Communities across the country are acting in increasing numbers to protect children from pesticides used at their schools, yet there are no national protections or standards for children. To correct this situation and ensure national leadership in protecting children from a daily dose of toxic chemicals in their classrooms, playgrounds and ballfields, support is needed on federal legislation, entitled the *School Environment Protection Act of 2001* (SEPA).

The U.S. Senate adopted SEPA, introduced by Senator Robert Torricelli (D-NJ) by unanimous consent on June 19, 2001, as an amendment to H.R. 1, the *Better Education for Students and Teachers Act*. The amendment, which is a negotiated version of the original bill introduced by Senator Torricelli in 1999, now goes to a Joint House Senate Conference Committee for adoption.

The *School Environment Protection Act of 2001* (SEPA):

- Requires local educational agencies to **implement a school pest management policy** considering sanitation, structural repair, mechanical, biological, cultural and pesticide strategies that minimize health and environmental risks as developed by the state and EPA approved;
- Requires **universal notification** 3 times per year ;
- Provides public **access to health and toxicity information** on all pesticides used in schools;
- Establishes a **registry** for parents and school staff to sign-up to receive 24 hour pre-notification of a pesticide application;
- Provides information on the pesticide's **adverse health effects on the notice** provided via the registry;
- Requires **signs to be posted** 24 hours prior to the pesticide application and remain posted for 24 hours;
- Exempts** antimicrobials, baits, gels, pastes, and EPA exempt pesticides from the notice via registry and posting requirements;
- Requires the area where a pesticide application is to take place be **unoccupied**;
- Requires **record keeping** of pesticide use and disclosure;
- Establishes **24 hour reentry period** for pesticide applications made via baseboard spraying, broadcast spraying, tenting or fogging, unless the label specifies a specific reentry interval; and,
- Does not preempt** state or local school from adopting a policy that exceeds provisions of the act.

The legislation, resulting from an historic agreement between organizations representing the environment, children and labor and groups representing the chemical and pest management industry and

agriculture is critical to providing basic levels of protection for children and school staff from the use of pesticides in public school buildings and on school grounds.

This legislation represents a straightforward approach to promote school pest management practices that minimize risk to children and notify and provide safety information to parents and school staff when pesticides are used in the schools," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. "The legislation resulted from a good faith effort on the part of groups normally at odds with each other to provide parents and school staff with information on pesticide use and pest management in local schools."

The tools and experience to control school

Urgent Action Needed Before the End of July

Show your support for the *School Environment Protection Act of 2001* (SEPA)

- Contact your U.S. Senators and U.S Representative to request that he/she support SEPA (S. AMDT. 805) as adopted by the Senate without weakening amendments.
 - ◆ *Personalized letters are the most powerful, otherwise mail, fax, or email the sample letter found on the reverse side. Calls are also effective.*
 - ◆ *To find the contact information for your Senators and Representative, see http://www.senate.gov/senators/senator_by_state.cfm and <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>.*
 - ◆ *Please send a copy of your letters to Beyond Pesticides.*
- Sign your organization, business, school, city council, local PTA, or civic association up as a supporter of SEPA by contacting Beyond Pesticides.
 - ◆ *For a current list of supporters, see <http://www.beyondpesticides.org>.*

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Urgent: Support Needed for Federal School Pesticide Bill

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pests without using toxic chemicals are available nationwide and have proven to be effective and economical. SEPA will help to put the alternatives in place. If pesticides are used, then clearly people have a right-to-know. The notification provisions are crucial to parent involvement.

Overall, state laws are inadequate.

Although some existing state laws have adopted standards that are tougher than some of the provisions in SEPA, no one state law contains all the elements included in this piece of legislation. This new legislation will bring the other 34 states up to this minimum and essential standard. Also under existing state laws, only seven states require schools use a pest management system that focuses on alternative pest management methods and on minimizing pesticide use. SEPA will require all schools across the country to implement such pest management strategies.

Children are more vulnerable to pesticide exposure.

Children are among the least protected population group when it comes to pesticide exposure, according to the National Academy of Sciences report, *Pesticides In the Diets of Infants and Children* (1993). Children, due to their small size, greater intake of air and food relative to body weight, developing organ systems and other unique characteristics, are at higher risk than adults to pesticides. Numerous studies document that children exposed to pesticides suffer elevated rates of childhood cancer. Studies link pesti-

cides to childhood asthma and respiratory problems. Scientists increasingly associate learning disabilities or attention deficit disorders with low level toxic exposure because of their affect on the central nervous system.

GAO report found data lacking. In fall 1999, the General Accounting Office (GAO), at the request of Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), conducted a national review of the extent to which pesticides are used in and around the nation's 110,000 public schools and the magnitude of the risk of exposure to children. The GAO report, *Pesticides: Use, Effects, and Alternatives to Pesticides in Schools* (GAO/RCED-00-17), found that the data on the amount of pesticides used in the nation's public schools is neither available nor collected by federal and most state

governments. The report also found that EPA is not doing enough to protect children from pesticides, and that there is limited information on how many children are exposed to pesticides in schools. The GAO cited EPA's analysis of the Poison Control Centers' Toxic Exposure Surveillance System, documenting 2,300 school pesticide exposures from 1993-1996. Because most of the symptoms of pesticide exposure, from respiratory distress to difficulty in concentration, are common and may be assumed to have other causes, it is suspected that pesticide-related illness is much more prevalent than presently indicated.

More information. For up-to-date information on SEPA, contact Beyond Pesticides or see www.beyondpesticides.org.

-SAMPLE LETTER-

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

Dear Senator (Representative) last name :

I am writing to request your support of Senate amendment number 805 (S.AMDT. 805), the *School Environment Protection Act of 2001*, as included in the *Better Education for Students and Teachers Act*, H.R.1. **Your support of S.AMDT. 805, as adopted by the Senate without weakening amendments, is critical to providing a safer and healthier environment for our children to learn.**

S. AMDT. 805 provides basic levels of protection for children and school staff from the use of pesticides at public schools. This critical piece of legislation is the result of a historic agreement between organizations representing the environment, children and labor and groups representing the chemical and pest management industry and agriculture.

Thank you for your help in moving the protection of children from school pesticide use ahead. **Please support S. AMDT. 805 to H.R. 1, as adopted by the Senate without weakening amendments.**

Sincerely,