

*For Immediate Release*

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## TOXIC CHEMICAL BISPHENOL-A (BPA) BANNED IN CONNECTICUT

*State Action Sends Message that the Public Supports Safer Products*

Hartford - Connecticut became the first state in the nation to ban the toxic chemical bisphenol A (BPA) from infant formula and baby food cans and jars, as well as the full range of reusable food and beverage containers. Governor M. Jodi Rell (R) signed the legislation into law, which will take effect on October 1, 2011. The BPA ban passed with significant bipartisan support; only one vote was cast in opposition to the final version of the bill. Connecticut's progress follows legislation in Canada, Minnesota, Suffolk County New York, and Chicago which prevents the chemical from use in baby bottles.

"Connecticut's landmark BPA bill will reduce exposure to an unnecessary hormone disruptor, and provide much needed protection for infants and toddlers," said State Representative Beth Bye (D, West Hartford). "This grassroots victory resulted from the persistent determination of a broad group of non-profit organizations, legislators, and individual voters around the state who took the time to personally contact their elected officials."

A diverse coalition of over 50 Connecticut non-profits teamed up to support the measure, including health professionals, labor unions, faith communities, environmental organizations, public health, reproductive rights, and health affected groups.

"House and Senate leaders on both sides of the aisle deserve praise for this bipartisan victory," said Sarah Uhl, who works for Clean Water Action to coordinate the coalition that backed the bill. "Volunteers and citizen leaders around the state have triumphed over chemical companies and their hired gun lobbyists."

BPA was first synthesized as a sex hormone and can now be found in common household products. BPA leaches out of plastic bottles, cups, and food can liners, particularly when heated, and contaminates food, beverages and ultimately the human body. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, 93 percent of Americans have detectable levels of BPA in their bodies. In May, Harvard University scientists published research showing that college students who drank water from polycarbonate sports bottles had 70% more of the chemical in their bodies than those who drank from BPA-free containers. More than 200 studies have found that low dose exposures to BPA are linked to heart disease, cancer, neurological impairments and reproductive problems.

Twenty states and four localities have proposed bans on BPA based on concerns that the ubiquitous chemical harms human health. Bills similar in scope to the Connecticut legislation are now pending in California, Michigan, and New York.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), broadly criticized by its own advisory board and other health experts for basing its August 2008 determination that BPA is safe only on studies funded by the chemical industry, has been forced to reconsider its position on the issue. Among other serious flaws noted by the advisory board: the industry-funded studies did not consider newborn exposure and health in their assessment, and the studies ignored basics like increased BPA leaching from baby bottles when parents sterilize or warm formula.

Infants and young children, as well as embryos and fetuses, are especially vulnerable to the effects of BPA. Even surprisingly low doses of BPA – parts per billion, or even parts per trillion - have been shown to cross the placenta and disrupt normal prenatal development.

“Early life exposure to Bisphenol-A and other endocrine disruptors can set children up for developmental disorders and serious illnesses later in life,” said Annamarie Beaulieu, MPH, campaign director for the Connecticut Public Health Association.

BPA has become the “poster child” for a larger problem at hand. Chemicals are not required to be tested for safety for humans and the environment before they are allowed on the marketplace.

“State and federal governments lack the oversight to ensure toxic chemicals do not end up in daily consumer products used by both adults and children, including: furniture, cosmetics, plastics, cleaning products and more,” said Anne Hulick, RN, JD of the Connecticut Nurses’ Association.

Responding to pressure from consumers, many retailers and manufacturers have taken the lead to eliminate BPA from their products. Wal-Mart, Toys R Us and Sears are just a few of the national chains that are phasing out baby bottles containing BPA. The nation’s six largest baby bottle manufacturers announced earlier this spring that they have either already eliminated or will phase BPA out of their product lines, and companies such as Nalgene and Eden Foods have taken voluntary actions to remove BPA from products indent for use by adults of reproductive age, such as sports bottles and food cans.

“Our members support the phase out of BPA not only to protect our families but also the workers in the plastic industry,” said Jim Vigue, political director of Connecticut Employees Union Independent. “This issue is important because new studies are showing that female plastic workers have an increase risk of infertility. We need to take action to promote safer alternatives to toxic chemicals so that the health of our workforce is protected.”

Members of the U.S. Congress are also starting to take note of consumer demand for BPA-free products. Senators Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and Representative Edward Markey (D-MA) have introduced bills that would ban BPA from food and beverage containers nationwide.

“We expect that Connecticut’s decision to ban BPA will have a major impact on the legislative debate in Washington, DC,” said Mark Mitchell, MD, MPH, president of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice. “The next step is to secure a federal ban so people everywhere are protected from BPA in food and beverage containers.”

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