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To the Editor,

Mercury is highly neurotoxic and exposure to even a small amount can cause learning disorders and developmental delays in developing children. Exposure at any age can affect the central nervous system, kidneys, and liver. Sales of mercury thermostats were banned in 2004 but most Connecticut homes still have mercury thermostats on their walls. Each contains about 4 grams of mercury; a single gram is enough to make all the fish in a 20 acre lake unsafe to eat.

The sales ban helps to prevent future pollution but efforts to recycle mercury thermostats already in use have been dismally ineffective. The voluntary manufacturer recycling program collects less than 5% of the number estimated to be coming off the walls each year, leaving the bulk to end up in landfills and incinerators.

What is the solution?

Several New England states have passed legislation crafted to increase recycling rates for mercury thermostats. Maine and Vermont have had great success with a \$5 incentive paid to anyone who returns a mercury thermostat for recycling. Their collection numbers have increased dramatically since this law went into effect. Pilot projects with incentives have had similar success. This year, the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut is backing a bill which would require manufacturers to increase recycling rates in Connecticut as well. The state legislature has introduced Senate Bill 93 AN ACT CONCERNING A MERCURY THERMOSTAT COLLECTION AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM, which includes a \$5 minimum incentive for return of mercury thermostats, education on the program and an increased number of collection points. Please make a call to your state legislators and ask them to support and co-sponsor SB 93.

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