

## Senate Passes Asbestos Ban

After fighting its way through Congress for 6 years, legislation that promises to ban the import and export of asbestos was unanimously passed by the Senate, bringing the measure closer to enactment.

If the bill gets through the house and does not get vetoed by President George W. Bush, the United States will join more than 40 other nations that have banned the cancer-causing material, which is found in more than 3,000 consumer products.

In addition to banning the importation, manufacture, processing and distribution of products containing asbestos, which will be enforced by the EPA, the Ban Asbestos in America Act of 2007 (S.742) calls for the creation of a \$50 million asbestos-related disease research and treatment network and a public awareness campaign highlighting the dangers posed by asbestos-containing products. Furthermore, the legislation would:

- Amend the Toxic Substances Control Act.
- Establish a national mesothelioma registry within 1 year that is set up by Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).
- Start a public information campaign about the hazards of asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos is known to cause or contribute to the severity of a number of illnesses, including mesothelioma, a cancer that occurs when malignant cells develop in the protective lining around the lungs. Despite this hazard, the substance is not banned. The EPA initially proposed a ban of most asbestos-containing materials in the late

1970s, but the rule was not finalized until 1989. In 1991, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the rule, finding that EPA had "failed to muster substantial evidence" in support of the ban.

Today, the United States uses about 2,000 tons of asbestos annually, down from almost 800,000 tons used in the mid-1970s.

According to Murray, the current fight to ban asbestos started in 2001, with a promise to two men dying of mesothelioma – Fred Biekkola and Brian Harvey.

"I told them I would stand with them every step of the way until this bill was passed,

sent to the president, and signed into law," Murray said. "...Because of the Freds and the Brians and the many other people I have met, and my great colleagues on the floor of the Senate, we are making a difference."



**U.S. Sen. Patricia Murray**

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