



Women's Voices for the Earth

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

EXHIBIT NO. 1

DATE: 2-14-05

BILL NO. SJ 15

## Support a Phase Out of PBDEs Vote YES on SJ 15!

### What are PBDEs ?

PBDEs, or polybrominated diphenyl ethers, are man-made chemicals commonly added to plastics, foam and textiles as flame retardants. PBDEs are used in cars, furniture, computers, household and office appliances and numerous other household objects.

### Where do we find PBDEs?

PBDEs are ubiquitous in our environment and evidence shows that Montanans have remarkably high exposure. Testing of breast milk from women in Helena and Missoula has documented levels of PBDEs 20 to 40 times higher than in Europe and Japan.

### What are the health effects of PBDEs?

PBDEs have been linked to nervous system damage, learning and memory impairment, behavioral changes, fetal malformations and thyroid hormone imbalance in laboratory experiments. PBDE exposure is of concern because they are structurally similar to PCBs, the toxic chemicals banned by the federal government in 1977. PBDEs do not readily break down and accumulate as they progress up the food chain.

### Who is at the highest risk from PBDEs?

Researchers believe that the most significant health risks associated with PBDEs stem from in utero exposure. International scientists are currently examining the presence of this chemical in breastmilk, grocery food (particularly meat, fish and dairy) and household dust.

### What is being done about PBDEs?

The European Union, along with California, Michigan, Hawaii and Maine have all banned the use of certain PBDEs. Companies like IBM, Apple, Sony, IKEA and Volvo, which formerly sold products containing PBDEs, have also removed them from their products.

### What will SJ 15 do if passed?

SJ 15 will support the eventual phase out of PBDEs in Montana. This resolution will encourage further research on the effects of PBDEs, the development of alternatives and the promotion of businesses and products that are free of this toxic chemical and promote breast milk as the healthiest choice for babies.

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**Will SJ 15 ban PBDEs in Montana or immediately impact companies selling products that contain them?**

No. SJ 15 will serve as a statement that Montana recognizes the threat of PBDEs and is willing to act to protect its citizens and families. SJ 15 does not restrict the sale of products containing PBDEs in any way, but instead encourages research of PBDEs and alternatives, and promotes businesses committed to phasing out these chemicals.

For more information, contact Alexandra Gorman, Director of Science and Research, Women's Voices for the Earth at (406) 543-3747 or [alex@womenandenvironment.org](mailto:alex@womenandenvironment.org).