SB 772 - Protecting Children from Toxic Furniture

For decades, California has had a unique and misguided fire safety regulation that has loaded furniture sold in our state with highly toxic fire-retardant chemicals. Fire retardant chemicals migrate from furniture into the dust in the air in our homes and from there into our bodies. Babies ingest the chemicals when they chew or suck on their bassinets and other furniture.

These toxic brominated and chlorinated chemicals are related to TRIS, a fire retardant once used in children's pajamas banned by federal authorities in 1977 as a carcinogen. These fire retardants are associated with cancer, birth defects, thyroid disruption, hearing deficits, learning disorders and mental retardation.

SB 772 (Leno) would strike the proper balance between protecting California parents should have the choice to purchase toxic-free children's furnishings.

Under current law, it takes a simple majority of the legislature or a local government agency to levy a mitigation fee on a business activity that harms the environment, public health or safety. Prop 26 would reclassify these fees as taxes, which would require approval by two-thirds of the legislature for state fees (an almost impossible task), or by a two-thirds majority vote in an election for many local fees.

Examples of existing fees that would have required a two-thirds vote under Prop 26 include fees on paint manufacturers to test children for exposure to lead paint, and fees on oil companies to enforce used oil recycling programs.

Proposition 26 opponents include the League of Women Voters, American Lung Association of California, California Federation of Teachers, Sierra Club, California Nurses Association, Consumer Federation of California, California Labor Federation, and California Alliance for Retired Americans.

Proposition 26 is nearly identical to Prop 37 which appeared on the ballot in 2000. A coalition of environmental, consumer, public health, labor and good government groups defeated that measure. This year, look for the same toxic mix of big oil, big tobacco and big alcohol to pump even more money into the Prop 26 campaign.

(Continued on page 2)
The defeat of Propositions 16 and 17 in June was welcome news for Californians fed up with the use of the initiative to advance narrow private corporate interests. The lavish spending by PG&E ($42 million on Prop 16) and Mercury Insurance ($17 million on Prop 17) only confirmed voters’ suspicions that private gain was the real agenda motivating the measures.

November brings a new crop of initiatives designed to maximize profits for outmoded industries. Prop 23 is funded mostly by two Texas-based oil companies whose California refineries rank among the state’s worst for air pollution.

These big oil companies will try to sell the fantasy that they want to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, but not now, God forbid. For big oil, the fight against global warming must wait until the Tooth Fairy ushers in an era of permanent low unemployment.

Greed Heads to the Ballot Box - Again

SB 797 (Pavley) and SB 772 (Leno) – SB 797 (Pavley) and SB 772 (Leno) – two landmark bills that would reduce children’s exposure to toxic chemicals – are approaching two distinct fates after facing aggressive, deceptive, and extremely well funded chemical industry opposition campaigns and long, grueling, and contentious journeys through the minefield that is the California Legislature.

SB 797 – Protecting Children from Toxic Baby Products

Growing evidence suggests that toxic bisphenol A (BPA)’s component found in plastic food and beverage containers, presents a heightened risk for reproductive health impacts for babies and young children.

In late 2008 the National Institutes of Health’s National Toxicology Program declared its concern about the effects of low levels of BPA on brain development, behavior, and the male reproductive systems of infants and children. Also in 2008, the FDA’s Advisory Science Board found that the FDA’s prior safety assessment for BPA was seriously flawed. And a recently released study by researchers at the University of Cincinnati says that exposure to bisphenol A may increase heart disease in women.

Now, the European Union is re-examining the issue, and a new European Food Safety Authority opinion is expected sometime later this month. Four nations aren’t waiting for the new study. Germany, France, Denmark and Sweden have already taken action in some form against BPA use.

Seven states — Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin — have also banned BPA in containers for young children’s food products.

SB 797 (Pavley) would ban the chemical from baby bottles, sippy cups, and infant formula cans sold or made in California - specifically those designed for children three years or younger.

Despite fierce industry opposition, SB 797 recently passed the State Assembly. The bill is now one small step away from the Governor’s desk.