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For Immediate Release

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Bill Requiring Informed Consent Before Dentists Use Mercury Amalgam May Be First in Nation

Montpelier, VT - - Advocates applauded the work of the House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee which passed out two important bills today that will significantly decrease mercury pollution in Vermont. The first requires dentists to have patients sign a consent form before receiving any procedure involving mercury-amalgam which informs them of the potential hazards to human health. The second requires a cash incentive be given to contractors that turn in mercury containing thermostats for recycling.

“Effective April 1, 2008, no mercury amalgam shall be placed in a patient’s tooth unless a dentist has provided the patient with a copy of a brochure...and the patient has first signed an informed consent form...that states “Dental amalgam contains 50 percent mercury, a highly toxic element with potential human risks. Such products should not be administered to a child 6 years of age or younger, pregnant women or lactating women,” reads the language in H.121 as passed out of the Vermont House Committee yesterday.

“Informed consent will empower Vermonters to just say no to mercury amalgam, and in the process help reduce pollution,” said Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project. “It’s also provides patients with the same information that many dentists have already received from manufacturers, which state that “The use of amalgam is contraindicated...In children 6 and under...In expectant mothers.”

87% of New Englanders think their dentist should be required to inform them about mercury and non-mercury dental fillings prior to treatment, according to a Zogby poll conducted for MPP last year. The poll also showed 69% of New Englanders support a ban on mercury-amalgam fillings for pregnant women and children.

“We think all Vermonters have the right to know that amalgam fillings are 50% mercury and that dentists must be required to tell them. Only then can Vermonters make an informed decision before placing a known neurotoxin in their mouths,” stated Jakki Flanagan, Public Health Advocate at VPIRG.

In a press account appearing in today’s Burlington Free Press, the executive director of the Vermont Dental Society said that the proposed consent form may be the first in the nation.

“We think this is a good first step and appreciate the committee’s work. Vermonters need more information so they can do the best possible job of protecting their own health and the environment, and dentists need to be a part of that,” stated Matt Levin, Outreach and Development Director, for Vermonters for a Clean Environment.

A companion bill also passed out of the committee that will require thermostat manufacturers to pay a \$5 bounty as a financial incentive to foster recycling of thermostat discards containing mercury.

Bender also said the thermostat bill will provide a much needed incentive for contractors to recycle mercury containing thermostats. “Current rates of recycling are extremely low. We anticipate this new change will bring recycling rates at least up to a 70% level – possibly more.”

For more information:

<http://www.mercurypolicy.org/new/documents/WhatPatientsDontKnow.pdf>

www.mercurypolicy.org

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