

**Media Advisory for November 14, 2 pm EST**

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## **U.S. House Oversight Hearing Focuses on FDA Regulatory Tools and the Environmental Impacts of Mercury Tooth Fillings**

***Hearing will show that dental uses contribute to high mercury levels in fish Americans consume***

***Testimony will also show, for the first time, that dental mercury air emissions may be more than five times higher than recent EPA estimates***

The U.S. House Oversight and Government Reform Committee will hold a hearing on Wednesday, Nov. 14, to discuss FDA's responsibility to evaluate the harmful environmental impacts of mercury dental fillings and to question why FDA has not finalized a rule proposed in 2002 to classify mercury tooth fillings under the Medical Device regulations.

Dental mercury releases from clinics are the largest contributor of mercury to municipal waste water treatment plants in the U.S. and are a significant contributor of mercury emissions to the environment and the fish Americans eat. Between 25 and 34 tons of mercury are used in mercury-based dental fillings each year to fill tooth cavities, and half of all mercury still used in commerce is in Americans' mouths -- about 1,000 tons. Testimony by one witness, Michael Bender, Director of the Mercury Policy Project, will show that dental mercury air emissions may be more than five times higher than recent EPA estimates.

The Committee hearing will take place at 2 pm EST on Nov. 14, in Room 2154 of the Rayburn Building.

Witnesses for the November 14 hearing include:

### **Panel I**

- TBD, *Environmental Protection Agency*
- Dr. Norris Alderson, Director, Office of Science and Health Coordination, *Food and Drug Administration*

### **Panel II**

- Mr. Ray Clark, Senior Partner, *The Clark Group, LLC*
- Mr. Bruce Terris, Partner, *Terris, Pravlik & Millian, LLP*
- Mr. C. Mark Smith, Co-Chair, Mercury Task Force, New England Governor's Conference
- Mr. Michael Bender, Executive Director, *Mercury Policy Project*
- Mr. Rod Mackert, Dentist and Faculty Member, *Medical College of Georgia*

The role of mercury tooth fillings, often called amalgams, in dentistry has become an issue of increasing concern for lawmakers recently for both environmental and health reasons. According to a recent article in *FDA Week*, “Subcommittee members Diane Watson (D-CA) and Dan Burton (R-IN) have pushed for hearings on dental amalgams, Burton’s spokesperson says. The lawmakers reintroduced legislation May 1 that would phase out such amalgams.”

Hearing witness Michael Bender is available for interview, along with Charlie Brown, national council for Consumers for Dental Choice. Mr. Bender and Mr. Brown represent a coalition of dentists and consumers pushing FDA to put mercury fillings through a formal evaluation because of the harm they cause to the environment and to patients.

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