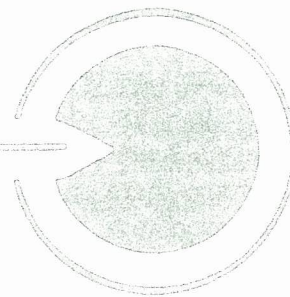


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NEWSLETTER



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CONGRESSIONAL BILL TO PHASE OUT DENTAL AMALGAM ANNOUNCED

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to Congresswoman Diane Watson (D-Los Angeles) for having the courage and determination to propose legislation phasing out the use of mercury fillings in the United States.

On 5 November 2001, Representative Watson announced her intention to introduce a bill, called "*Mercury in Dental Filling Disclosure and Prohibition Act.*" Her bill would call for:

- No mercury amalgam dental fillings for pregnant women, nursing mothers, or children under age 18 by 1 July 2002.
- A health warning over dental amalgam mercury for all citizens by 1 July 2002.
- A phase out of use of dental mercury amalgam fillings in five years.

Some very important comments were made by Representative Watson in her statement:

"Mercury is an acute neuro-toxin. It is the most toxic non-radioactive element and the most volatile heavy metal. In recent years, it has been, or is being, removed from all health care uses, save one."

"Today, I am announcing legislation to disclose and phase out the last major use of Mercury in the human body. The fillings that organized dentistry wrongly calls 'silver' are mainly Mercury, not silver. Mercury is the major ingredient in each filling, about one-half gram per. In the words of Professor Boyd Haley of

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the University of Kentucky, that is a 'colossal' amount of Mercury in scientific terms - as much, in fact, as is in a thermometer. A teenager with six fillings has six Mercury thermometers worth of Mercury in his or her mouth."

We might add that the release of mercury from

amalgams has been acknowledged by organized dentistry for decades. So, Representative Watson's statement might well be "six leaking Mercury thermometers."

Representative Watson goes on to state:

"The public does not know about the presence of Mercury and its risks for two reasons. First, the fillings are falsely called 'silver.' This term is deceptive, because there is much more Mercury than silver in the product. It's time to call it what it is, and quit hiding the large presence of Mercury. Second, the ADA has a rule that gags dentists from talking about the risks of Mercury amalgam, a rule that some dental boards enforce against dentists who call for the elimination of Mercury in dental fillings."

Many individuals familiar with the mercury amalgam controversy will recognize Representative Watson. As a State Senator in California, she introduced the legislation that required the California dental board to write a Fact Sheet about the risks and efficacies of dental fillings. She states that her goal *"was to ensure the public could make informed choices about Mercury dental amalgam. But the Dental Board continued to ignore the law and, in recent years, defy the Davis Administration's insistence that it comply with this law."*

Representative Watson also pointed out that dental amalgam mercury presents a health risk to dental personnel and a danger to the environment. She stated: *"Mercury amalgam is dangerous before it is put in the mouth - any dental journal will tell you that - and it is considered hazardous waste after it has been removed. Who can conclusively say it's safe between, when it is in our bodies.?"*

In closing, Representative Watson stated: *"My bill will protect children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers immediately - regardless of their income. Henceforth, amalgam will bear warnings that they not be placed in these most*

vulnerable people. And there will be health warnings for all consumers of amalgam, also immediately. Then, there is a five-year phase out of Mercury amalgam. That will give dentistry plenty of time to shift to alternatives that exist in today's market - resin, porcelain, and gold - or to develop new materials. Dentistry says amalgam is fine because it has been used for 150 years. This statement makes no scientific sense. We have abandoned other remnants of pre-Civil War medicine, and we have abandoned all other uses of Mercury. It is no longer a question of if, but when, Mercury dental fillings will be history. I say five more years is time enough."

Representative Watson certainly deserves the support of everyone. Please express that, and your appreciation to your U. S. Senators and Representative, and to Representative Watson herself: [Diane.Watson@mail.house.com] Our recommendations for "Act Against Mercury Now" follow later in this issue.

NATIONAL BLACK CAUCUS RESOLUTION AGAINST AMALGAM

In late November of 2001, the **National Black Caucus of State Legislators** adopted the following resolution:

"Whereas:

- 1) The major ingredient of dental amalgams (43-54%) is mercury;*
- 2) Mercury is an acute neuro-toxin;*
- 3) Each mercury amalgam filling contains about one-half to three-fourths gram of mercury, the same amount of mercury as is in a mercury thermometer;*
- 4) The mercury in dental amalgam continually emits poisonous vapors while in the filling;*
- 5) The term 'silver' to describe a product that has substantially more mercury than silver does not accurately convey needed information to consumers;*
- 6) Mercury is being removed from all other*