

# NEWS

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*... from the Illinois House of Representatives*

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FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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## **May Legislation to Remove Mercury Switches from End-of-Life Vehicles Unanimously Passes Senate**

*Measure Now Moves to Governor's Desk*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Legislation sponsored by state Rep. Karen May making Illinois a leader in preventing dangerous mercury from end-of-life vehicles enter our environment now awaits Governor Blagojevich's signature after passing unanimously out of the Senate on Monday.

"I'm extremely pleased that this legislation has now passed the House and Senate with unanimous consent," said May. "My fellow lawmakers have sent a strong message that Illinois is committed to being the first state in the Midwest and one of only a few throughout the country that are taking proactive steps to address this environmental hazard.

House Bill 5578, the Mercury Switch Removal Act, creates a program to capture mercury switches from end-of-life vehicles before they are crushed, shredded, melted or otherwise processed. May's legislation creates a voluntary program for manufacturers of vehicles in Illinois to implement policies to capture the mercury switches. However, the program sets very clear and ambitious goals for the program as to the percentage of switches that must be removed. If these objectives are not met by the determined dates, the program will become mandatory with an incentive paid to boost recapture rates. Though mercury switches in cars, used in convenience lighting and anti-lock breaking systems contain only a small amount of mercury, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency believes this plan could prevent the release of up to 400 pounds of mercury a year.

May's legislation marks a significant move forward in the fight to remove mercury from the environment. Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin that can critically harm the nervous system and can lead to serious brain and nerve damage, increased risk of autism and behavioral problems.

Mercury, even in small amounts, has serious consequences. The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued a statewide fish consumption advisory, warning pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children not to eat more than one meal a week of predator fish, for example bass, walleye or northern pike, caught in Illinois waters due to high mercury concentrations. Mercury is especially toxic to young children and developing fetuses. Long-term exposure to low levels of mercury can harm the central nervous system and cause learning problems.

May has been a staunch advocate for removing mercury from our environment. In the 93<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, she was the chief House sponsor of Senate Bill 2551 which placed strict restrictions on products containing mercury. She also held a “Mercury Forum” in Highland Park last fall to inform her constituents about the potential dangers of the toxin.

“One of the keys aspects of this legislation is that it benefits all aspects of our communities, including businesses and families,” May said. “The General Assembly has shown that it is committed to cleaning up the mercury from our environment. Though this is a big success, it is only the beginning. We must continue to work for a cleaner safer Illinois and I’m committed to doing just that.”

May’s legislation has received numerous supporters. In addition to passing with unanimous approval from the House, the measure is supported by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Autism Society, the Illinois Nurses Association, the Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Environmental Council and the Sierra Club.

House Bill 5578 now awaits the Governor’s signature.

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