

LAW & JUSTICE

Toxic Chemical in Bottles Targeted

County Chair proposes ban to protect kids

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen has introduced a county ban on baby bottles, sippy cups and other re-usable containers that contain the industrial chemical Bisphenol A, which environmental activists claim to be harmful for kids.

Cogen's proposal picks up where state lawmakers left off, after a state initiative failed to prohibit the sale of products containing the chemical, which is produced in large amounts and widely used to make resins and polycarbonate plastics, including baby bottles, linings of metal food and baby formula cans.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, Bisphenol A exposure was found among 93 percent of Americans age 6 and up during a test in 2007, and babies and infants are considered the most vulnerable to the health effects of the chemical because of differences in metabolism and body size between infants and adults.



A proposed Multnomah County ban on plastic bottles that contain the toxic chemical Bisphenol A is geared toward baby bottles, sippy cups and other containers.

The highest levels of exposure, however, are found in African Americans, women and low-income families.

"The chemical is likely to have a disproportionate impact on low income people and some communities of color because breast feeding is lower," said Dr. Gary Oxman, Multnomah county health officer. "When you have a community where there is less breast feeding, that means people are more dependent on feeding using baby bottles."

According to Oxman, labs and scientific research have shown the

chemical to impact thyroid function, brain growth, changes in behavioral development, and breast and prostate cancer, and there is a good amount of scientific knowledge that says this chemical is harmful to babies.

"From a public health perspective, this is a significant issue," said Oxman. "It is something where we have widespread exposure, particularly in infants, and there are good alternatives that don't contain this chemical."

The real question is, he said, "why should we expose babies to this

when we don't have to? This is a preventative action that the county is proposing to take."

According to Multnomah County Health Division, the higher levels of exposure to the chemical can be attributed to the pervasive use of corner markets and dollar stores to purchase infant formula and baby bottles because many families in urban low-income communities are less likely to shop at places that carry affordable Bisphenol A-free products.

Oxman said the media coverage a few years back on the dangers of the chemical resulted in a variety of changes in the plastics used by several companies.

"You see a ton of aluminum and stainless steel bottles now," he said. "You weren't seeing that three or four years ago, but the industries

have responded to the concern by offering people alternatives."

Although he said the manufacturing industry's voluntary action is a good thing, the policy approach of the county would take preventative measures further.

"If we change the motivation in the market by banning the Bisphenol A containing containers, it just completes the process the industry has already started," he said. "We think from the public health and science perspective, there is good evidence and a good rationale for doing this."

Multnomah County would join Washington and California if the ban on products containing the chemical were to be successful.

County commissioners will take public comment during a hearing on Thursday, Oct. 27.

Ceasefire Oregon to Collect Guns for \$50

The Ceasefire Oregon Educational Foundation will be holding a Gun Turn-In event on Saturday, Oct. 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Memorial Coliseum.

All guns, working or not working, will be accepted with no questions asked. Each person turning in a firearm will receive a \$50 Fred Meyer gift certificate for each workable firearm or a \$5 Burgerville certificate for all non-working firearms. Ammunition and BB guns will also be accepted.

For the last 15 years, Ceasefire Oregon has collected over 7,500 guns for such turn-ins and raised the awareness of the risks and responsibilities of gun ownership, including the importance of safe storage.

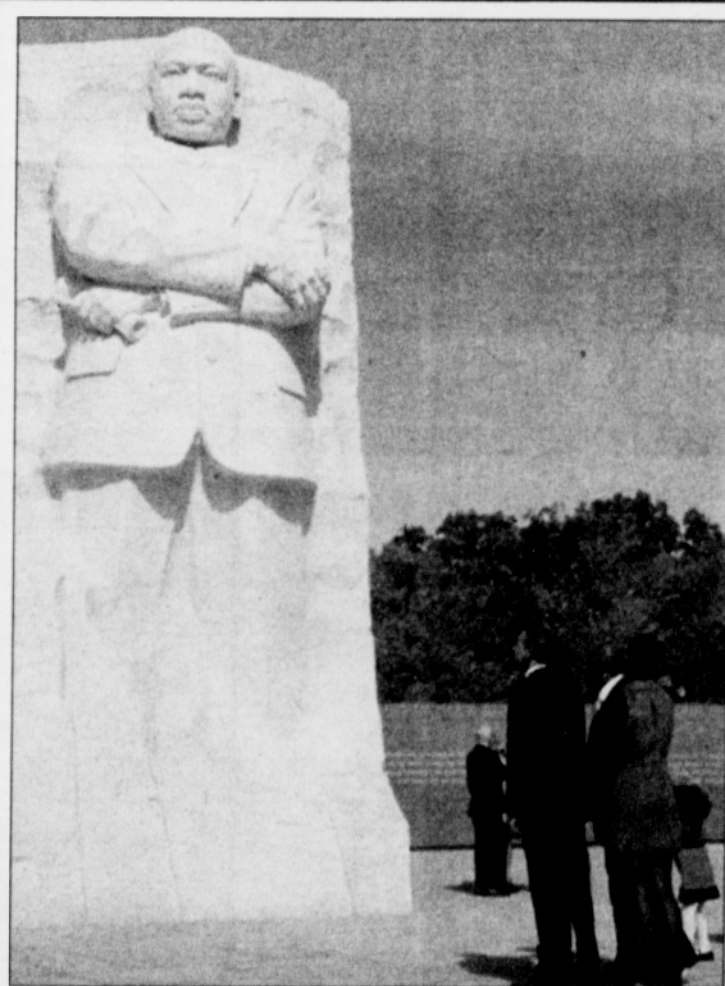
"Don't let your family feel the impact of gun violence," said Julie Wheeler, one of the faithful volunteers for the education foundation. "The statistics show that a gun in the home is much more likely to be used against you instead of to protect you."

Wheeler said the collection of guns is not about the Second Amendment.

"We just want those unwanted and unwarranted firearms away from where they can cause harm - in some cases, fatal harm," she said.

Because the guns collected are destroyed, the gun you turn in will never get into the wrong hands which means you will help reduce the number of gun accidents, suicides, and homicides.

This event is co-hosted by the City of Portland Mayor's Office and the Portland Police Bureau.



Martin Luther King Memorial Dedicated

President Barack Obama and his family look up at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. On the discourse in politics today, Obama said Americans could learn something from King about the tone of debate.

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The Billy Webb Elks Lodge (6 N. Tillamook St) presents:

Every Sunday Night
Portland's Own Lady of Jazz - Shirley Nanette
6-9 PM - Free Admission

October 21st, 22nd and 28th
DJ Michael Morris Performing
9PM - Until late
\$5.00 Cover Charge

Learn to Line Dance Friday Nights
Its Ladies Night; ladies 1/2 Price (\$2.50); Men (\$5.00) Starts @ 7PM; includes Michael Morris.

A "Worthy Affair"
11/19 Fashion Show and Dance
9PM-1AM
\$15 - \$20