

# HEALTH

## Health Advocates Win Fluoride Debate

City council approves plan; opponents want public vote

(AP) — The City Council last week approved a plan to add fluoride to Portland's water, meaning Oregon's biggest city is no longer the largest holdout in the U.S.

The ordinance calls for city water to be fluoridated by March 2014.

Dental experts say fluoride is effective in fighting cavities. Opponents of public fluoridation say it's unsafe and violates an individual's right to consent to medication.

"Reasonable people can disagree, but the science is on the side of fluoridation," Mayor Sam Adams



Water flows from a Benson bubbler drinking fountain, downtown. The City Council has approved a plan to add fluoride to Portland's drinking water.

said after the unanimous vote. Opponents also say council members rushed into action without a public vote. They plan to collect almost 20,000 signatures in the next 30 days to force a referendum

early next year — before the mineral is added to a water supply that serves about 900,000 people in Portland and a few suburbs.

Commissioners said now is the time to act because Portland children have more dental problems than kids from neighboring states that fluoridate, and adding the mineral to the water is the most safe, effective and affordable way to address it.

Seventy-three percent of the U.S. population drinks water treated with fluoride — more than three times the rate in Oregon.

Fluoride opponents contend the dental benefits of fluoride are small and don't outweigh the cons. Several pointed to a recent study by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health, which appeared in Environmental Health Perspectives. It showed that Chinese children who had high levels of naturally occurring fluoride in their drinking water had lower IQs than those who lived in villages with less fluoride in their

water.


Residents with thyroid issues, kidney disease and multiple chemical sensitivity worry fluoridation will make their lives worse. Others are concerned it can cause cancer, autism and other problems.

Commissioners counter that more than 200 million Americans drink water with added fluoride, and it doesn't appear to have caused great harm. Moreover, it is endorsed by most health organizations, including the American Medical Association and Centers for Disease Control.

Fluoride supporters and opponents agreed that fluoridation alone won't solve Portland's dental problems. They say parents must stress proper hygiene and stop giving their children drinks loaded with sugar.

But the commissioners say fluoridation will at least give children, particularly those from families without money or education, some protection against tooth decay.


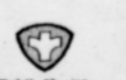
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### Coal Hazards Review Ordered

Multnomah County will conduct its own review of the potential health hazards of coal trains headed to Northwest shipping terminals.

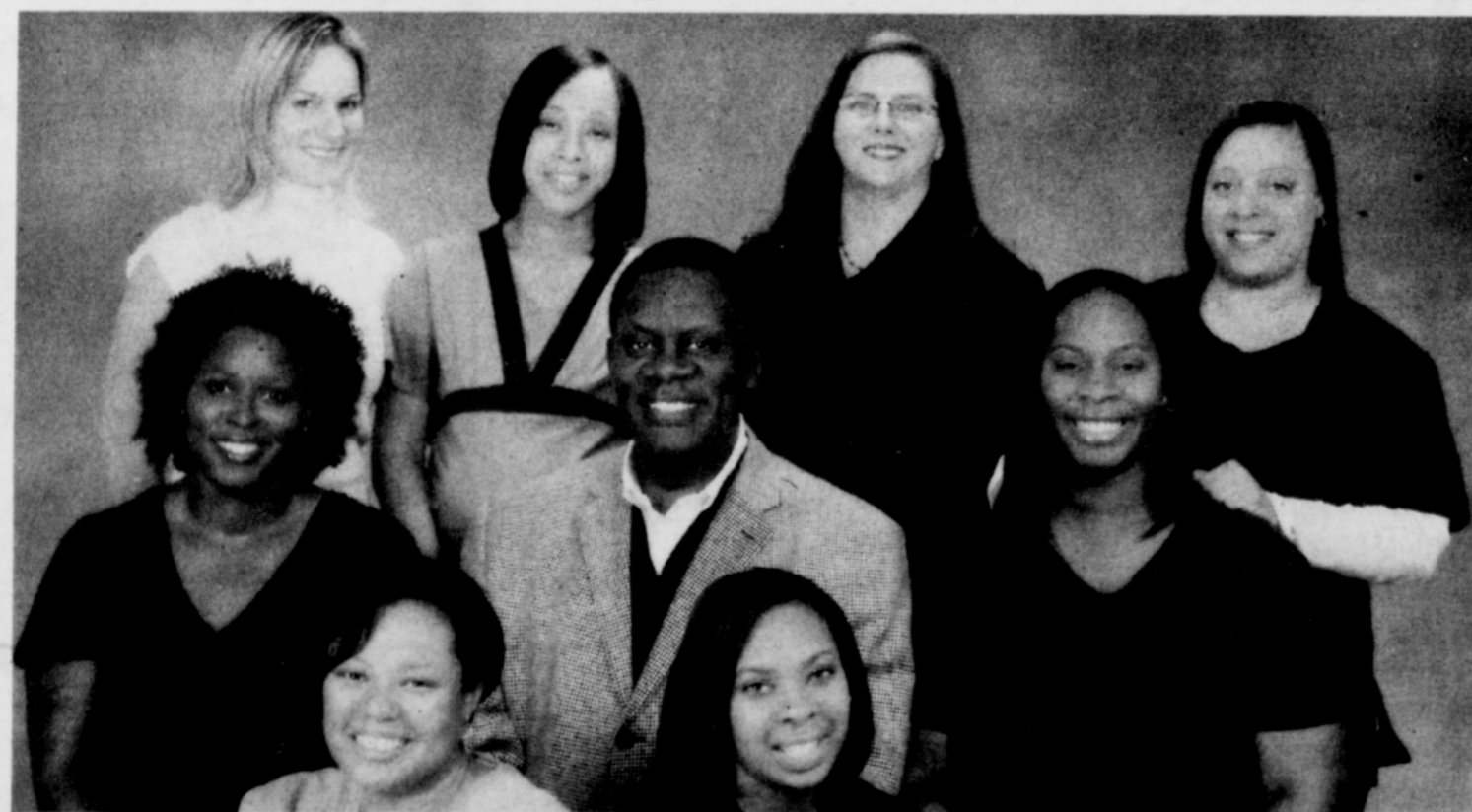
County Chairman Jeff Cogen is asking the county health department to focus on diesel emissions and dust from uncovered coal cars. He also wants the emergency management office to study potential delays caused by long coal

trains at crossings.

Cogen says the county can't stop the trains or force railroads to cover the cars, but it can demand protective measures.

Three of the five proposed coal terminals in Washington and Oregon would likely route coal trains through Portland.

The trains would carry coal from Montana and Wyoming to terminals for export to Asia.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers (above center) and his skilled staff are ready to help those in need.

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