

## \* Action Alert: Toxic Hotspots

### **SB 1855**

The League of Women Voters of Texas supports SB 1855 by Senator Mario Gallegos. SB 1855 establishes "toxic hotspots" in various geographical areas in Texas. This bill was presented to the Natural Resources Committee on April 17 and is pending before the committee until April 24, at which time the committee will vote on it.

SB 1855 bill establishes a "toxic hotspots" pilot program, toxic hotspots being defined as geographic areas which exceed ambient air toxic standards. This is a new approach in Texas, and one that recognizes that some areas are more likely to exceed toxic air standards than others. For example, the petrochemical region of Houston-Beaumont-Orange-Port Arthur should be treated differently than the more non-industrial areas of West Texas. This bill speaks to that issue.

Furthermore, this legislation sets standards for certain priority toxic air contaminants, including:

- benzene
- 1,3 butadiene
- diesel particulate matter
- ethylene dichloride
- nickel

These air toxics are known to have significant health effects and some are carcinogenic. The rule in this legislation for carcinogens is that a contaminant can not result "in a lifetime excess cancer risk greater than one in 100,000 for a person exposed to the contaminant." The League of Women Voters would prefer the stricter one in one million rule. However, we may have to accept the lesser standard of one in 100,000 as a starting point.

This is the first time ambient air standards have been set for air toxics in Texas and thus this is milestone legislation.

#### **Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee are:**

Sen. Kip Averitt

Vice Chair: Sen. Craig Estes

#### **Members:**

Sen. Kim Brimer

Sen. Bob Deuell

Sen. Robert Duncan

Sen. Kevin Eltife

Sen. Glenn Hegar

Sen. Juan Hinojosa

Sen. Mike Jackson

Sen. Kel Seliger

Sen. Carlos Uresti

**ALL LOCAL LEAGUES:** Please write, e-mail or call all the members of the committee, particularly if your senator is on the committee.

**ALL MEMBERS:** Please write, e-mail or call your senator if he is on the committee.

To access your senator on line:

- 1) Log on to the State Senate website at [www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us)
- 2) Click on “Senators” and then the name of your senator.
- 3) Then get the phone number or click on the “send email” on the page.
- 4) If calling you can ask to talk to the Senator or their aide that handles specific issues or you can leave a message with the clerk:

**e.g. ‘I am (your name) and I live (or am a voter) in Senator (name) district. I support SB 1855 by Senator Gallegos and I hope that Senator (name) will vote for this bill in the Natural Resources Committee.**

**This bill sets up an air toxics program that will take us a long way to achieving clean air in Texas.’**

Do not mention that you are a League member. It is much more important for them to know that you live and vote in their district!

For more information on these bills, please see Legislative Newsletter #7.