



JOHN E. BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

DAVID P. LITTELL
COMMISSIONER

June 20, 2007

The Hon. Albert R. Wynn, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wynn:

As Commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP), I am writing to express strong support of H. R. 1534, the "Mercury Export Ban Act of 2007."

In Maine, mercury poses a significant public and environmental health problem. Even as we proudly celebrate the quality of our natural resources, we must live with the reality that fish consumption advisories have been posted for Maine's 5,800 lakes and ponds and our 32,000 miles of rivers, streams and brooks. Maine is hardly unique in this regard; 43 other states have issued similar warnings based on mercury contamination. Together we present a compelling call for strong commitment and decisive action at the national level.

Mercury travels great distances through the atmosphere and readily transfers between air, water and soils. The danger it poses to children and wildlife is intensified by the fact that it does not break down into harmless pollutants once it is released to the environment. Our challenge therefore is to eliminate present and future sources of added contamination even as we attempt to deal with the legacy of past practices.

As you know, Maine has been a leader in this regard. In-state controls have reduced mercury emissions over 75% since 1990. Seventy-five percent of our State's historic use of mercury in products will be eliminated through a series of sales and disposal bans. Recycling and collection programs, including amalgam separators in dentists' offices, are keeping significant amounts of mercury out of Maine's environment. Yet, because mercury remains in widespread use elsewhere in the world, atmospheric transport continues to bring mercury into our state. Maine's actions alone cannot stop ongoing contamination of our environment.

The "Mercury Export Ban Act of 2007" proposes a course of action to address this problem. Mercury is now exported from the United States, frequently to developing countries for activity that has long been illegal in this country. H.R. 1534 would not only impose a ban on such export, it would also establish a commission to study whether a permanent mercury storage reserve should be established. Having had to deal with elemental mercury left behind when a chlor-alkali plant closed in Maine, this state has strongly supported the development of a national repository for some time.

The simple truth is that no one state can solve the problem of mercury contamination. The "Mercury Export Ban Act of 2007" presents the opportunity for targeted, decisive federal action addressing a national environmental and public health problem. I urge your subcommittee's positive endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Littell", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David P. Littell
Commissioner