

**SENATE RESOLUTION 108--DESIGNATING THE FIRST WEEK OF APRIL
2007 AS ``NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS WEEK'' -- (Senate - March 15,
2007)**

Mr. BAUCUS (for himself, Mr. *Reid*, Mr. *Kennedy*, Mrs. *Feinstein*, Mr. *Durbin*, Mrs. *Murray*, and Mr. *Leahy*) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. Res. 108

Whereas there is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos;

Whereas deadly asbestos fibers are invisible and cannot be smelled or tasted;

Whereas when a person inhales or swallows airborne asbestos fibers, the damage is permanent and irreversible;

Whereas these fibers can cause mesothelioma, asbestosis, lung cancer, and pleural diseases;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases can take 10 to 50 years to present themselves;

Whereas the expected survival rate of individuals diagnosed with mesothelioma is between 6 and 24 months;

Whereas little is known about late-stage treatment and there is no cure for asbestos-related diseases;

Whereas early detection of asbestos-related diseases would give patients increased treatment options and often improve their prognoses;

Whereas asbestos is a toxic and dangerous substance and must be disposed of properly;

Whereas, in 1977, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified asbestos as a Category 1 human carcinogen, the highest cancer hazard classification for a substance;

Whereas, in 2002, the United States Geological Survey reported that companies in the United States consumed 9,000 metric tons of asbestos, of which approximately 71 percent was consumed in roofing products, 18 percent in gaskets, 5 percent in friction products, and 6 percent in other products;

Whereas, in 2006, the World Health Organization issued a policy paper, and the International Labour Organization adopted a resolution, agreeing that all forms of asbestos

[Page: S3225]

are classified as human carcinogens, no threshold for "safe" exposure exists, and the elimination of asbestos use is essential to stop the global epidemic of asbestos-related diseases;

Whereas nearly half of the more than 1,000 screened firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, and volunteers who responded to the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, have new and persistent respiratory problems;

Whereas the industry groups with the highest incidence rates of asbestos-related diseases, based on 2000 to 2002 figures, were shipyard workers, builders of vehicle bodies (including rail vehicles), pipefitters, carpenters and electricians, construction workers (including insulation and stripping workers), extraction workers, energy and water supply workers, and manufacturing workers;

Whereas the United States has substantially reduced its consumption of asbestos, yet continues to consume almost 2,000 metric tons of the fibrous mineral for use in certain products throughout the Nation;

Whereas asbestos exposures continue, but attention to safety and prevention has reduced significantly and will continue to reduce asbestos exposures and asbestos-related diseases;

Whereas the United States continues to import over \$100,000,000 worth of asbestos products annually, such as brake pads and linings, cement pipe, floor tiles, and other asbestos products from other countries for use throughout the Nation;

Whereas asbestos-related diseases kill 10,000 people in the United States each year, and the numbers are increasing;

Whereas people in the small community of Libby, Montana, have asbestos-related diseases at a rate 40 to 60 times the national average, and suffer from mesothelioma at a rate 100 times the national average;

Whereas asbestos exposure is responsible for 1 in every 125 deaths of men over the age of 50;

Whereas asbestos has been the largest single cause of occupational cancer;

Whereas asbestos is still a hazard for 1,300,000 workers in the United States;

Whereas asbestos-related deaths have increased greatly in the last 20 years and are expected to continue to increase;

Whereas 30 percent of all victims of asbestos-related diseases were exposed to asbestos on naval ships and in shipyards;

Whereas asbestos was used in the construction of virtually all office buildings, public schools, and homes built before 1975;

Whereas safety and prevention will reduce asbestos exposure and asbestos-related diseases; and

Whereas the establishment of "National Asbestos Awareness Week" would raise public awareness about the prevalence of asbestos-related diseases and the dangers of asbestos exposure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate--

(1) designates the first week of April 2007 as "National Asbestos Awareness Week";

(2) urges the Surgeon General, as a public health issue, to warn and educate people that asbestos exposure may be hazardous to their health; and

(3) respectfully requests the Secretary of the Senate to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Surgeon General.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise in support of the resolution introduced by Senator *Baucus* to designate the first week of April 2007 as "National Asbestos Awareness Week." It is my hope this resolution will raise public awareness of this dreadful substance and the pain and suffering that it has caused. It is also a reminder of our responsibility to the victims of asbestos in Nevada, in Libby, MT, and all over America.

We know too well that the effect of exposure can be deadly. Diseases caused by asbestos include cancers of the lung, digestive tract, colon, larynx, esophagus, kidney and some types of lymphoma; pleural disease; asbestosis; and, of course, mesothelioma. These devastating illnesses take the lives of 30 Americans each day and as many as 10,000 Americans each year.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, 1.3 million Americans still face significant asbestos exposure in their workplaces. However, the danger is not confined to the Nation's shipyards, mines, or construction sites. Countless others are exposed in their neighborhoods, in schoolyards and at home; mothers and children who would otherwise have no clue that their very health is in jeopardy from this poisonous substance.

The cases of disease and death caused by asbestos exposure are not abstractions. Real lives are affected and destroyed by this dreadful substance. I have received countless letters from victims of asbestos-related diseases and their families. Each one shares another story of loss and of pain, of sickness and of tragedy.

James Baxter, a retired railroad worker from Carson City, NV, suffers from lung damage and respiratory problems. Richard Strauss from Las Vegas, NV, lost his father 3 years ago from asbestos exposure. Like many others, these two men contacted me seeking help in dealing with the hardship and tragedy they have endured.

Margy Urnberg from Carson City, NV, had a father, Ronald Johnson, who died from asbestos exposure. He worked in a vermiculite mine and received secondhand exposure from living in Libby, MT. Connie Peck-Youso was born and raised in Libby, MT. Although she never worked in a mine, she bares the scarring in her lungs from the same type of secondhand exposure that had such terrible consequences for Mr. Johnson.

Alan Reinstein, the cofounder and former Director of Communications of the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, suffered with acute mesothelioma. Alan fought bravely and responded to his illness as a call to action. Sadly, he lost his battle with his terrible disease last year. The Alan Reinstein Memorial Award was created to honor those, like Alan, who have brought awareness to the victims of asbestos. Les Skramstad will be honored posthumously this year.

Last year, the Senate debated a bill to remove asbestos liability cases from the court system and compensate victims from a trust fund. I strongly opposed that bill because it was unfair to asbestos victims. The bill would have made it too difficult for seriously injured victims to recover damages, and the trust fund would have been inadequate. Rather than deprive asbestos victims of their day in court, we should pass legislation to ban asbestos and heighten public awareness of this fatal disease.

I am also pleased to be a cosponsor of the legislation recently reintroduced by Senator *Murray*, the Ban Asbestos in America Act of 2007, which would ban asbestos by prohibiting asbestos-containing products from being imported, manufactured, processed, or distributed in the United States. While it has been banned in over 40 countries around the world, we continue to import over \$100 million worth of asbestos products annually. This is more than 30 million pounds of asbestos that is imported for use throughout the Nation. Additionally, the bill calls for a public awareness campaign to help educate patients, workers, family members, and health care providers on the dangers of exposure to asbestos, along with possible treatment options. Asbestos is killing far too many people. We can and should do more. Senator *Murray's* bill and the National Asbestos Awareness Week are a step in that direction.

END