



STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARRY REID
SENATE RESOLUTION DESIGNATING APRIL 1, 2006, AS
NATIONAL ASBESTOS AWARENESS DAY

Mr. President, I rise to introduce a resolution to designate April 1, 2006, as “National Asbestos Awareness Day.” Introducing this resolution is one small step in an effort to raise awareness of this dangerous substance and the painful effects that exposure to asbestos has caused throughout this country. Last year the Senate unanimously passed a similar resolution. It is my hope that designating another National Asbestos Awareness Day will serve as a reminder that exposure to asbestos remains a significant problem in this country, asbestos-induced illnesses continue to kill or disable Americans at an alarming clip, and our resolve to adequately protect the rights of these victims must not falter.

There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. Despite this fact, the substance still routinely manifests itself in too many work environments. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), 1.3 million Americans still face significant asbestos exposure in their workplaces. Some estimate that more than 27.5 million workers have been exposed to asbestos while on the job.

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; asbesostis; and, of course, mesothelioma. For many of the more serious, asbestos-related diseases, there is no cure.

These devastating illnesses take the lives of thirty Americans each day and ten thousand Americans each year. Countless others were exposed in their neighborhoods, in school yards and at home. Hundreds of thousands of men and women have died or become severely ill due to asbestos exposure.

The Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization is a registered 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.
1525 Aviation Boulevard, Suite 318 · Redondo Beach · California · 90278 · (310) 437-3886)

**“United for Asbestos Disease Awareness, Education, Advocacy, Prevention, Support
and a Cure.”**

www.AsbestosDiseaseAwareness.org

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.

Adrienne Zapponi of Wellington, Nevada witnessed firsthand what asbestos does to the human body. Her husband suffers from asbestos exposure. In her letter she wrote, “[My husband] cannot enjoy a single day of life because he has 40% lung capacity. This means that he can't walk for any distance, he can't do simple jobs around the house such as mow the lawn, he can't remember things such as when to take his medication, he can't drive because he is drowsy and can't concentrate on the road.”

Margy Urnberg from Carson City, Nevada had a father, Ronald Johnson, who died from asbestos exposure. He worked in a vermiculite mine and second-hand exposure from living in Libby, Montana. Alan Reinstein, the Cofounder and Director of Communications of the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, is suffering from acute mesothelioma. Alan is fighting bravely and has responded to his illness as a call to action.

Yesterday I mentioned our brave veterans who have been exposed to asbestos, and the difficulty they have encountered in seeking compensation for that exposure. Steven Mitchell served ten years in the U.S. Navy as a boiler man. He worked in the engine and boiler rooms on several ships handling asbestos insulation on a daily basis. After leaving the Navy, he returned to work on his family farm raising wheat.

Steven was diagnosed with mesothelioma and spent his last days in a V.A. Nursing Home. Due to the intense pain, he was constantly administered morphine. Just before he died, he no longer even recognized his daughter.

We have seen the case of Philip Schreyer, who began helping his country with the war effort in 1942 at the Ford Motor Company's Willow Run B-24 bomber plant. This plant was producing a bomber an hour during its peak operation, and many asbestos products went into each section of the bombers. Later that year, Mr. Schreyer joined the Navy serving as a radio man aboard the USS Wyoming until 1946. The USS Wyoming shot off more rounds than any other ship during War World II. Every time a round was fired dust would come down off the insulated pipes like “snow”. Little did Mr. Schreyer know that this dust falling on him was deadly asbestos.

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Phil survived World War II, an injury aboard a warship that ended his Navy career, and a hunting accident that cost him his leg. He did not survive asbestos exposure. In 2002 he learned he had mesothelioma and was told by his doctors that he would not survive this disease. The doctors were right. On January 20, 2005, Phil Schreyer, who had survived so much, lost his final battle with mesothelioma and died.

Each one of the ten thousand Americans who will die from asbestos exposure this year will have a similar story. Each one will leave behind a family that will never be whole again. Each one is counting on us here in the Senate to ensure they have the means necessary to pursue their rightful claim for the damages asbestos exposure has caused them and their families.

The so-called FAIR Act will not provide these protections and that is why I oppose it. As I have explained, this legislation attempts to set up an alternative system for recovery that is doomed to failure and will unacceptably impair the rights of victims. We in the Senate need to remind ourselves that our best efforts must always be directed toward meeting the needs of victims, and the FAIR Act falls short.

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