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Assemblymember Quirk holds Oversight Hearing on Law to Reduce Public Exposure to Toxic Chemicals

SACRAMENTO – Assemblymember Bill Quirk (D-Hayward), chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials (ESTM) held an oversight hearing yesterday on Proposition 65.

Proposition 65 was enacted by voters in 1986 and requires the State to public a list of chemicals known to cause cancer or birth defects or other reproductive harm. Businesses are required to provide a warning to the public before knowingly and intentionally exposing anyone to a Proposition 65-listed carcinogen or reproductive toxin. Businesses are also prohibited from discharging these chemicals into water.

“Through my research and conversations, I have come to believe that while the intent of the initiative is sound, it has been thirty-one years since it passed, and things have changed over that time,” said Assemblymember Quirk. “With new warning regulations coming online, now is an excellent time to examine whether the law is effective at informing Californians and protecting them from exposure to toxic chemicals. “

In 2013, Governor Jerry Brown called for changes to Proposition 65 so that the information provided to the public is clearer and reduces instances of “overwarning.” As a result, the Office of Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is currently implementing a major regulatory change to how business provide warnings and information to consumers about these toxic chemicals.

“This was a great learning experience,” said Assemblymember Quirk. “Yesterday’s testimony highlights the successes Proposition 65 has had in protecting the public, and also the opportunity we have to help businesses comply with the law and provide consumers and workers with the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions. My takeaway is that everyone recognizes that complying with Proposition 65 is the right thing to do. We have to continue to do our part to ensure that we are helping retailers and manufacturers proactively comply and not rely solely on punitive action.”

Panelists represented research organizations, advocacy groups, labor, private business and academia.

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*Elected in 2012, Bill Quirk brings his PhD in astrophysics and career as an educator and scientist to the State Assembly. He is the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials. He is also Chair of the Select Committee on California's Clean Energy Economy. He is a member of the Agriculture, Public Safety, Revenue and Taxation, and Utilities and Energy Committees. **Website of Assemblymember Quirk:** <http://www.asmdc.org/quirk>*