

A LEGISLATOR'S VIEWPOINT

Protecting Kids, Pets (and Business too): One Plan You'd Think the U.S. Senate Could Agree On

By George Allen

If you painted a portrait of the perfect American family, it would certainly include small children and a family pet. That's why I'm shocked that some U.S. Senators are deliberately obstructing my bill to protect small children and pets from a lethal poison—the sweet-tasting antifreeze that leaks from the engines of cars and trucks.

You may not realize it, but every year, 10,000 dogs and cats are killed and an untold number of children are rushed to the hospital after accidentally drinking antifreeze. I want to prevent this tragedy from happening to any family, so last year, I proposed The Engine Coolant and Antifreeze Bittering Agent Act to add a bittering agent to antifreeze, making it less tasty and less dangerous to thirsty animals and curious toddlers.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs, Product Safety, and Insurance, I called a hearing last July along with the subcommittee Ranking Member Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR). Among the witnesses were a New Mexico legislator whose own dog died by ingesting antifreeze, leading her to sponsor a similar bill in her State; a member of the Doris Day Animal League, which works tirelessly for protecting all animals; and a Vice President of Honeywell, the largest antifreeze manufacturer in the world. You might expect animal rights advocates to be at odds with business. But in fact, this legislation is strongly supported by the antifreeze industry.

Currently, three states have enacted their own distinct standards for adding denatonium benzoate (DB) to antifreeze. If each state creates a different standard, antifreeze companies would face a very difficult and costly problem producing 50 different recipes for 50 different states. In hopes of creating some uniformity, the Antifreeze Bittering Agent Act would create one national standard.

Unfortunately, some in the Senate have placed speculative environmental and legal hypotheticals above the safety of children and animals. Several United States Senators have attempted to draw false comparisons between the bittering agent used in antifreeze and prob-



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lems that occurred with MTBE, a fuel additive with environmental risks. However, states like California, New Mexico, and Oregon, all known for their environmentally friendly policies, have been adding a bittering agent to antifreeze sold within their borders for years without any negative environmental consequences. Furthermore, bittering agents are added to antifreeze in such minute concentrations and stored above ground in secure tanks so as to avoid accidental leaks. If any environmental issues were to arise, the antifreeze industry, as well as the bittering agent industry, could each be held liable for any harm caused by their respective products. There is no blanket liability protection in this bill. In fact, this is a government mandate on an industry that produces a product that already requires safe use and disposal.

In my view, this bill is a win-win situation. I believe we have found a consensus that will lessen and prevent harm to children and animals with no liability concerns

Please see Allen, page 19

Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate in 2001, Sen. George Allen served as the 67th Governor of Virginia from 1994 – 1998. He is a member of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. He is the primary sponsor of the Engine Coolant and Antifreeze Bittering Act of 2005 (S. 1139).

McGrath, continued from page 9

ist. "Beverlee had a great deal of experience working with people and she had built a successful career in the entertainment industry."

"This work has given me such a sense of satisfaction - it is far more rewarding than a standing ovation after a show," said McGrath.

Sara Amundson has supervised McGrath's work for the past 15 years and appreciates her honest approach. "Bev presents the pros and cons of an issue, outlines who the opposition is and what their arguments will be," said Amundson. "Other lobbyists tend to put more spin on an issue;

there is a tendency to sugarcoat. Bev doesn't do that."

When asked what makes her a good lobbyist McGrath said simply, "I don't hear the word 'no,' I hear 'maybe.' I know that everything can be changed." As DDAL's lead lobbyist in Washington, D.C., Amundson knows it takes more than caring about animals to crusade on their behalf. "Plenty of people have drive and commitment but few turn out results like Beverlee," said Amundson. "Her determination leads to measurable success for animals."

"Everyone has a gift they can offer to society," said McGrath. "The trick is to find *your* gift."



Top: Beverlee with actress Victoria Principal, lobbying for the California Alternatives bill; bottom: Beverlee with California State Sen. Christine Kehoe discussing legislation banning the sales of puppies less than eight weeks old.

Doris Day, continued from page 2

I would love it if I didn't have to ask because it's hard for me to do that, but I can't do all of this by myself. That's why I wanted to take this time to thank you from my heart for continuing to support my organizations and, in doing so, helping us protect our precious animal friends.

Word, continued from page 3

about and preparing for a disaster may make the difference between a very sad, and a happy ending for all.

May each of you have a wonderful summer and I hope none of this planning is necessary! (But do it anyway).

Allen, continued from page 7

and minimal cost to consumers (less than three cents per gallon of antifreeze). This is a prudent, common sense solution which has the support of animal owners, manufacturers, and customers alike and will protect everyone in that portrait of the perfect American family.



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