

Restaurant Transfat Ban Passes CA Legislature: Time to Lobby the Governor

AAP-CA supported-bill AB 97 (Mendoza) passed the Legislature this week. The bill would ban trans fat use, as specified, in California restaurants.

See below article from The Sacramento Bee for details. The full bill text can be viewed at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

Now is the time to contact the Governor and urge him to sign AB 97. The Governor can be reached at:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

State Capitol Building

Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: 916-445-2841

Fax: 916-558-3160

or through email at <http://gov.ca.gov/interact#email>.

California Legislature serves up a restaurant trans fat ban

By Jim Sanders - jsanders@sacbee.com

Published 12:00 am PDT Tuesday, July 15, 2008

California lawmakers made it official Monday: Eating at some restaurants can be bad for your health.

Vowing to fight heart disease, lawmakers approved legislation to ban restaurants and bakeries from using trans fats.

Assemblyman Tony Mendoza, an Artesia Democrat who proposed AB 97, predicted his bill will save lives if signed into law.

Mendoza, a former fourth-grade teacher, said many kids struggle with obesity and lack of exercise at very young ages.

"Using trans fats in fast-food and other restaurants is not helping at all," Mendoza said.

AB 97 now goes to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who signed legislation last year to ban trans fats in public school cafeterias but has taken no position on Mendoza's bill.

Assemblyman Chuck DeVore, R-Irvine, said the trans fat ban could increase commercial food prices by ordering restaurants to use substitutes within several years or risk being fined.

"For gosh sakes, this is taking government power to an absurd extreme," DeVore said.

Many restaurants voluntarily have agreed to crack down in recent years.

Wendy's, McDonald's, Taco Bell, Denny's, Burger King, Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Applebee's, El Pollo Loco and Denny's are among restaurants committed to fully or partially eliminating their use of trans fats, according to the California Restaurant Association.

"We're probably doing it already," Lauren De La Rosa, manager of Ettore's Bakery in Sacramento, said of the proposed ban. "We don't use any shortening or anything that's really hydrogenated."

Trans fats, also known as trans fatty acids, can increase the shelf life and flavor stability of foods but are suspected of contributing to heart disease.

The substance often is found in vegetable shortenings, some margarines, cookies, crackers and other products made with, or fried in, partially hydrogenated oils, according to a Senate analysis of AB 97.

While cities, including New York and Philadelphia, have banned trans fats, an aide to Mendoza said no other state has done so.

Mendoza's bill would require California restaurants to stop using trans fats by January 2010, and bakeries to follow suit one year later.

Violators would be subject to fines ranging from \$25 to \$1,000.

Mendoza's bill does not apply to trans fats in packaged goods sold in stores.

AB 97 cleared its final legislative hurdle Monday when the Assembly concurred in amendments largely along party lines, 42-27, with only two Republicans voting yes.

The California Restaurant Association criticized the measure as a "very narrow and misleading approach to a much larger health issue."

Banning trans fats, without taking other steps, will not significantly improve Californians' health, the restaurant association said in a letter.

Reducing use of trans fats could increase the use of saturated fats and other alternatives that "may have the same negative health impacts," the group said.

Ethnic-food restaurants could be hit particularly hard by a ban on trans fats, because some of their entrees are difficult to prepare with substitutes, the restaurant association added.

"The particular oil used in a food affects product taste, appearance, texture, performance and stability," the group's letter said.

Greg Aghazarian, a Stockton Republican who supported AB 97, said the societal trend toward healthier foods is becoming clear.

"It's happening," he said. "We might as well be part of the solution."

Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Van Nuys, voted yes on AB 97 but cautioned that it's no cure-all. Families need to evaluate their portions, calories and carbohydrates as well, he said.

"Eliminating trans fats may be part of the solution, but it's not the whole solution," Levine said.

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