

Mandatory Fluoridation for Oregon Communities—The Inadvisability of H.B. 3099

By
Dallin Harmon,
Legislative Assistant to St. Rep. Dennis Richardson
May 9, 2007

Oregon's House Committee on Health Care has sponsored [House Bill 3099](#) (HB 3099) that would require fluoride to be added to Oregon community water systems.

There are two fundamental issues that must be considered by Oregon state legislators before making HB 3099 law. 1. Does recent research and science substantiate that ingested fluoride is safe and effective? 2. Should the state be mandating fluoride to our local communities?

The goal of HB 3099 is to help prevent tooth decay. This bill is advocated by the American Dental Association (ADA) and Center for Disease Control (CDC). The ADA and CDC both feel that the benefits of water fluoridation is well established, substantial and very important for reducing tooth decay for those who do not have access to necessary dental care. The CDC stated that fluoridated water helps prevent tooth decay "when delivered through the water supply to children during the tooth forming years, and through direct contact with teeth throughout life."

From the numerous studies that have been conducted, fluoride would not only seem the best option to help prevent tooth decay, but Oregon's Department of Human Services also feels that for every dollar spent on fluoride, there is thirty-eight dollars saved in expenses.

On the other side of the fluoridated water debate, The National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), and the Union of Government scientists of the United States Environmental Protection Agency of Washington DC, [voted unanimously](#) to co-sponsor a California Initiative to ban fluoridation. Their study concluded that fluoridating water could potentially have side-effects of "cancer, genetic damage, neurological impairment and bone pathology."

Dr. Robert Isaacson, a member of the [National Academy of Sciences](#), said these negative physiological consequences of fluoridation "should be a wake-up call." Dr. Isaacson warned that fluoridated water should not be added to our water systems unless the recent studies have been fully refuted.

Interestingly enough, many other countries have strong concerns about fluoridated water. [Germany, Sweden, China, Japan and a host of other countries](#), after thorough research and careful consideration all refuse to allow fluoride in their water systems. Although their stated reasons for opposing fluoridated water varied, all agreed fluoride should not be infiltrated into their water systems. In essence, the risk and unintended consequences of fluoridating water to their citizens is too great in light of the many recent studies against fluoridated water. Also, they concluded, "there are better ways of providing the fluoride our teeth need."

With this different perspective in mind, could it be possible that fluoridated water is not proven? Is it also possible that when ingested it causes multiple diseases? Furthermore, could the risk be greater than people understand? I am not willing to take this risk. I also think that such a significant issue should be resolved at a personal level. With that being said, should state legislators exercise the power to require that fluoride be put into your water?

State legislators can pass a law which would regulate and enforce our choices of additionally added fluoride in our community's drinking water. The choice of drinking that water is left completely up to us. In my opinion, this should not be allowed; it is a serious infringement on an individual's personal choices. State laws should be limited, and mandating fluoride in our community's drinking water is not limited. More decisions need to be dealt with at a local level. More problems need to be solved from where they originate, starting with the individual person, then falling back upon the family, then looking to the community, and then the state if need be. If this were done, state and federal government involvement would be required less frequently. In essence, more personal choices, more problems solved from where they originate, and more freedom for the individual person. Thomas Jefferson spoke on this subject of local control, and in his quote he is referring to New England's form of local self-government:

"...townships in New England, are the vital principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self government, and for its preservation."

(See: <http://www.wvculture.org/history/statehood/cc021863a.html>)

Do not get me wrong I do not have a problem with topically applied fluoride. In fact, I think topically applied fluoride is a very good tooth decay preventative, with few side affects. However, I cannot see the justification for allowing the state to mandate controversial chemicals in our communities' drinking water.

In closing, I would like to reiterate, fluoridating Oregonian's water system has too many controversy, potential diseases and unintended consequences to be forced on local communities. The issue of fluoridating Oregon's water in hopes of preventing tooth decay, should be resolved at a community level. It affects local communities and should be determined by a local vote of the people. Otherwise, the state unnecessarily imposing its will on local communities. As Oregon [State Senator Ted Ferrioli](#) (R- John Day) put it, "If I can put fluoride in your water, where do I draw the line."