

NEWS RELEASE

Assemblywoman Carole Migden
Chairwoman, Assembly Committee on Appropriations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FIRE-SAFE CIGARETTE LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

MIGDEN INTRODUCES BILL TO REQUIRE CIGARETTES SOLD IN CALIFORNIA
 TO MEET FIRE-SAFETY STANDARDS

Sacramento, CA—Assemblywoman Migden unveiled legislation today (AB 2200) to require all cigarettes sold in California to meet basic consumer safety standards to ensure that the products will not ignite household items such as mattresses and upholstery. This legislation is the direct result of a fire in San Francisco that claimed the lives of five young children and a 42-year-old grandmother in the City's most deadly fire in over a decade. Tragically, cigarette fires are regular occurrences in the United States. So far this year, at least two more individuals in San Francisco have lost their lives in fires suspected to have been ignited by cigarettes. Nationwide, cigarettes are the leading cause of fire fatalities. Over 1,000 Americans are killed, and thousands of others are seriously injured in cigarette related fires every year.

Since the December fire, Assemblywoman Migden learned that for years the tobacco industry has had the ability to alter cigarettes so they do not ignite household items like upholstered furniture, mattresses, and carpet. Studies have shown that simple design changes can make cigarettes fire-safe by making them burn cooler, or to not burn as long as regular cigarettes.

"Inexplicably, two of the most dangerous consumer items made in America, cigarettes and handguns, are the only two consumer items that are not subject to any sort of consumer safety standards," stated Migden. "Does it make sense to require teddy bears and pajamas be fire-safe, but not cigarettes? When was the last time you heard of a teddy bear causing a three alarm fire?"

more... more... more...

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AB 2200 requires the State Fire Marshal to develop performance standards by June 1, 1998 and for all cigarettes sold in California to meet those standards by January 1, 2000. Similar legislation to AB 2200 was introduced in the state Legislature in 1980 by then Senator John Garamendi. That legislation passed the Senate, but was later defeated in the state Assembly. Since that time, legislation introduced in Congress and efforts to change federal regulatory standards have also failed under severe pressure from tobacco interests.

"This legislation is long overdue," said Migdal. "The tobacco industry may never be able to design a cigarette that does not cause heart or lung disease, but they can and should design cigarettes that will not burn you to death."

AB 2200 is supported by the California Firefighters' Association, the California Fire Chiefs' Association, the Trauma Foundation, and the Children's Advocacy Institute.

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