

From Cal. State Sen. Garamendi's office.

1/27/82

Fire-Safe Cigarettes  
Background and Information

I. BACKGROUND:

Unattended burning cigarettes are the number one preventable cause of fatal home fires in California. In 1981, 76 people were killed, 218 people were injured and over 25 million dollars in property was lost in fires caused by cigarettes.

Although the industry does not reveal the compounds used in making cigarettes, there is evidence that manufacturers add phosphate, citrate compounds, and other chemicals to the paper or the tobacco in order to promote a long burn. Porous paper is often used to allow more oxygen into the cigarette to ensure a steady burn to the end.

The technology exists now to end the senseless deaths of countless, often innocent, citizens. One way to produce a fire-safe cigarette is to remove the burn promoting chemicals that many manufacturers add to their cigarettes. (World-wide, there are over 95 patents for fire-safe cigarettes.)

There are brands of cigarettes now sold in California which are already self-extinguishing -- Mores and Shermans are among those considered to be safe.

II. LEGISLATION

The Garamendi bill is an attempt to help solve this serious fire problem that exists in California. It is not an attempt in any way to prohibit smoking or tax tobacco products.

This legislation attempts to substantially reduce the number of injuries, deaths, and destruction of property caused by cigarette fires by establishing cigarette performance standards.

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The bill would require:

- The State Fire Marshal, by June 1985, to set a performance standard for cigarettes and little cigars so that they will not ignite home furnishings if left unattended.
- These standards would be developed with the aid of the Bureau of Home Furnishings of the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- Any person who sells or distributes non-"fire-safe" cigarettes 18 months after standards have been set will be fined \$1,000 per day for each day of violation.

### III. COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### Toxicity

Question: Is it true toxic chemicals might be added to slow the burning of cigarettes?

Answer: Cigarette companies do not need to add chemicals to retard burning. Non-toxic methods of producing self-extinguishing cigarettes are available, such as leaving chemicals like citrate and phosphate out of cigarettes.

#### Consumer Acceptance

Question: Will the taste of cigarettes be altered by additives making them fire-safe?

Answer: The bill does not require the addition of any additives to make cigarettes fire safe. If cigarette companies choose to use additives, then there could be a change in taste. Product taste is already altered by blending, preservatives, expanders, and moisteners. The fire-safe brands, More and some Shermans, have little or no additives and do self-extinguish.

#### Economic Impact

Question: Won't requiring a fire-safe cigarette place an undue economic burden on cigarette companies in the form of increased manufacturing costs?

Answer: Sales are good for the tobacco industry. A recent Federal Trade Commission report said Americans bought a record number of cigarettes in 1980, but Californians still lost 25 million dollars in damages due to fires caused by cigarettes. Just as the cigarette companies have researched ways to lower tar and nicotine, they should pursue avenues to develop a fire-safe cigarette in order to help save 2,000 lives nationally a year.

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## Furniture Alternative

Question: Wouldn't it be better to develop improved ignition resistant fabrics and furniture construction methods than to require fire-safe cigarettes?

Answer: Under current California state law, furniture is required to be fire retardant. To increase the level of fire resistance would be prohibitively expensive. Furthermore, there would be a lag time of 20-30 years before new furniture would replace older, less fire resistant furnishings. Also, many highly ignition-resistant fabrics, once finally aflame, produce highly toxic fumes and gases.

## Over-Regulation

Question: Isn't there already too much hasty government regulation of private industry?

Answer: The problems of cigarette-caused fires, deaths, and injuries must be responsibly addressed. This legislation gives a reasonable time table in which to develop such technologies.

## Health Hazard

Question: Don't most fire-safe cigarettes burn inefficiently and therefore increase tar and nicotine levels to smokers?

Answer: The development of a cigarette with fewer health hazards should continue, but this bill is not an anti-smoking bill and does not seek to address the health concern of smoking cigarettes. This bill is intended to stop the deaths, injuries, and property loss due to fires caused by cigarettes. Both paths must be pursued.

## Implementation

Question: How long will the cigarette industry have to develop and produce fire-safe cigarettes?

Answer: The Garamendi bill states that the State Fire Marshal shall, by June 1, 1985, set fire safety performance standards for cigarettes.

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