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**HEADLINE:** House votes to ban importing of B, C wastes

**BYLINE:** Joe Bauman Deseret Morning News

**BODY:**

As expected, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to ban importation of **Class B** and **C radioactive** wastes, ending a yearslong controversy in the Legislature. What was unusual is that the bill's co-sponsor, Rep. Craig A. Frank, voted against it.

SB24 was guaranteed to pass, having sailed through the Senate without a dissenting vote. Leaders of both houses and both parties supported it. Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. had come out for the ban during a press conference.

Frank, R-Pleasant Grove, outlined one reason for passing SB24, when he addressed the House.

"It is clear that if we ask our people, the people that we represent, if they would prefer to ban B and C wastes, I think we would find that they would prefer that action," he said.

**Radioactive** material is used to our benefit in medicine and food preservation, he said.

He added that the National Academy of Sciences is wrapping up a study concerning low-level radiation exposure. It will address risk models that have been in effect for more than 50 years, he said. It may show a potential for hazard -- or "we may find the other extreme, though," Frank said.

"But if we go back to the people and the voice of the people, the people that we represent, I think the policy is clear. . . . We need to stand up and be counted here for the people of this good state of **Utah**."

His unusual position on the matter may stem from changes in the bill as it worked its way through the Legislature.

During the House's noon break, Frank said he was asked to co-sponsor SB24 in the House probably because he was a member of the joint legislative task force that had studied the issue.

The task force recommendations were the basis for the bill, which originally did not contain a ban on B and C. This is **radioactive** wastes that are considered low-level but are "hotter" than the **Class A** waste presently disposed in Tooele County by Envirocare of **Utah**.

Only after Envirocare's new owners announced the company would not continue seeking the hotter material, and legislators and the governor spoke in favor of a ban, was the bill amended to prohibit importation of B and C.

Frank, asked to co-sponsor SB24, apparently harbored concerns about the later version.

Speaking on the House floor, he pointed out that this is an important bill, with the most important part the ban on importing B and C wastes.

He said a small amount of B and C waste are generated in the state.

"As we create this policy for our state . . . all parties are comfortable with this," he said. Frank urged his colleagues to "do the politically expeditious thing and to vote for this bill."

"My only regret is that we didn't pass it two years ago, when it was first brought up," said Rep. Kory M. Holdaway, R-Taylorsville.

Rep. James A. Ferrin, R-Orem, asked Frank, "Could you tell me why I should vote to forever ban B and C wastes from the state of **Utah**?"

"I would like to answer that," Frank replied, "but I'm not sure if I can."

Responding to Ferrin's queries, he said the task force did not receive any testimony from the **Utah** Department of Environmental Quality indicating the waste couldn't be stored safely.

In fact, Frank added, DEQ experts told the group that "the current practices of disposal in our state guarantees safety." A ban might cost the state \$10 million a year in fees, he added, replying to another question from Ferrin. That figure is based on importing a "medium amount" of B and C waste, Frank said.

Ferrin said he could not support the bill and charged proponents of a ban had been trying to scare people. The fees could be useful, he indicated.

"I'm not going to do the politically expeditious thing," Ferrin said. "I'm going to do the right thing," and vote against the ban.

"There are plenty of good reasons to ban this," said Rep. Stephen H. Urquart, R-St. George, the House majority whip. "Step one is we represent the people," who don't want the hotter material brought in.

Also, he said, the amount of fees that could be generated through importing B and C is "absolutely minuscule," and **Utah** generates almost none of this material.

After the bill passed 57-13, reporters asked Frank why he had voted against it. He noted the federal study that was going on and said radiation is used in medicine all the time.

"We certainly, from a political and community standpoint, have taken a very important step toward what we think is a good policy, and I would suggest that we've done the right thing here today," Frank said.

So why did he vote against it?

"It is a good policy currently, but I think we have some other concerns to address as this study comes out," he said.

Asked what he was urging representatives to do in his summary, Frank said, "I was urging them to seek for more information and perhaps research the issue a little bit more themselves."

Did he want them to vote for or against the bill?

"That would be up to them," he replied.

Frank noted that a ban was already in place, and "this is basically wrapping the ban in another ban."

Jason Groenewold, director of the Healthy Environmental Alliance of **Utah** -- who has long battled for the ban -- said it was good to finally see passage. "All we need now is the governor to sign the bill, which he's indicated he would do," he said. E-mail: bau@desnews.com

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