

Senator Gaylord Nelson
404 Old Senate Office Building



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70-51

FOR RELEASE: 9:30 A.M., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15:

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Senator Gaylord Nelson Wednesday proposed national pollution controls on all pesticides as "the logical next step toward ending the worldwide assault on the environment by these toxic compounds."

The Wisconsin Democrat said he will introduce legislation shortly with Maine Senator Edmund Muskie's cosponsorship requiring the Secretary of the Interior to set standards on all pesticides to regulate their degradability, toxicity and public health effects.

"It is time we started keeping products out of the marketplace until they are proven safe to the environment and to human beings, instead of waiting for their massive use to discover tragic, unforeseen consequences," Nelson said in a speech here this morning at the annual meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association.

Nelson has also introduced bills to set national environmental standards on detergents and on consumer packaging from bottles, cans and jars to cardboard boxes.

The address here was another in Nelson's 17-stop nationwide tour this month to propose an agenda for nationwide action to achieve a decent environment. The Senator proposed last fall the environmental teach-ins that will culminate in Earth Day programs on April 22nd in thousands of colleges, high schools and communities across the country.



Passage of the measure to be introduced by Nelson and Muskie would be the second major action of this Congress to more effectively control pesticides. The first was the recent Congressional approval of a Nelson amendment, with the cosponsorship of Muskie and 30 other Senators, to stop pesticides from reaching hazardous levels in the nation's waters. The amendment requires the Secretary of the Interior to develop guidelines for states to use in setting standards to control pesticide water pollution.

In arguing for further legislative action, Nelson said that "for nearly three decades, the environment has been bombarded by persistent, toxic pesticides at an annual rate now approaching a billion pounds from U. S. productions, more



than five pounds for every man, woman and child in America."

He noted that residues of pesticides remain in the environment in concentrations still toxic to fish, wildlife and, potentially, to man for months, often years, and pointed out that the disastrous effects of long-lasting pesticides have been documented time after time.

As an example, last spring the Food and Drug Administration seized 28,000 pounds of Lake Michigan Coho salmon because they were contaminated with DDT. "Despite traveling hundreds of miles through the air, soil, water and the food chain of perhaps a half dozen organisms," Nelson explained, "the residues of the DDT were still concentrated in the salmon at levels of 19 parts per million, nearly four times the safe limit."

Nelson said that pesticide pollution is nationwide and worldwide. He cited a recent U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries survey that found DDT in 584 of 590 samples of fish taken from 45 rivers and lakes across the United States.

Worldwide, pesticide residues have been found in penguins of the Antarctic and have pushed several species of sea-ranging birds such as the Bermuda petrel to the brink of extinction over large portions of their ranges.

Nelson said the legislation he will introduce will establish uniform performance standards for all pesticides to protect the environment and public health. He said the measure should lead to the further development and use of pesticides that are selectively toxic with limited persistence.

"Hopefully," Nelson added, "the pesticide industry and the Agriculture Department will take the initiative and embark on a major commitment to find additional effective chemical and non-chemical alternatives to the many hard pesticides still in use today." With Congressman David Obey (D-Wis.) and Paul McCloskey, Jr. (R-Cal.), Nelson has urged Congressional appropriations committees to restore pesticide research funds.

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