

Bill barring vaccines with mercury for youngest goes to governor

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - Legislation that would ban vaccines with mercury for pregnant women and children younger than 3 won final legislative approval Wednesday and moved to the governor's desk.

Starting in April 2007, vaccines containing more than a trace amount of mercury could not be administered to those people. Insurance companies also would be required to cover mercury-free vaccines at the same rate as those that contain mercury.

Some parents and advocates blame mercury for a nationwide rise in autism, hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder.

"We should at least send the message out that Missouri is concerned about mercury and we are going to protect the children that weigh the least," said Sen. Norma Champion, R-Springfield.

The bill was similar to legislation recently passed in California, and pharmaceutical companies are already working to comply with those requirements.

The measure allows an exemption of the mercury-free requirement if the governor and the state health director determine it is needed to prevent an epidemic or outbreak. Sen. John Loudon, R-Ballwin, complained that the exceptions are too broad, but eventually allowed the bill to pass.

The bill also contains other measures, including reinstating a small program that provides personal assistants to some disabled people who aren't eligible for Medicaid.

The Senate passed the legislation 30-4 on Wednesday; the House passed it 157-1 on Tuesday.

Mercury vaccines bill is SB74.