

## Assemblyman Koon's Environmental Health Tracking Legislation passes the Assembly

(June 4, 2009) Assemblyman David Koon just moments ago, on the floor of the Assembly, finished successfully debating his legislation that calls for the creation of an environmental health tracking system (A.5343-A). This bill calls for the evaluation of a variety of chronic diseases and their correlation to environmental exposure. It passed unanimously with a 123 to 0 vote.

"I'm excited by the passage of this important legislation. This bill will allow medical professionals and public health officials to focus on the responsible, cost-effective strategy of disease prevention by honing in on the link between environmental exposure and many chronic diseases, including cancer," Koon said.

Recent reports from the Pew Environmental Health Commission at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health state that chronic diseases are responsible for seven out of every 10 deaths in our country each year, with economic costs totaling \$325 billion annually.

Taking this into consideration, along with the fact that many chronic diseases, including cancer, birth defects and asthma have been linked to environmental exposure, is what prompted Assemblyman Koon to introduce this legislation. This new bill will create a working group within the Department of Health in consultation with the Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Labor, and the State University of New York School of Public Health to determine the best approach in developing this tracking method. Once this system is in place, it will allow the state to employ more cost effective prevention measures by monitoring and tracking chronic diseases.

"As it stands right now, the state lacks the tools and therefore the knowledge to assess these potentially harmful connections," Koon said. "This legislation takes tremendous strides by collecting comprehensive data so that we can determine the most effective strategies to prevent these chronic diseases that plague so many New Yorkers."

Assemblyman Koon continues to advocate for legislative measures that promote chronic disease prevention. The legislation passed today is the second bill in three years that the Assemblyman has passed relating to the exposure of environmental toxins. In 2007, a bill prohibiting the distribution and sale of jewelry containing lead, in an effort to reduce the hazards of lead exposure (A.8077), passed both houses of the Legislature. Though this bill was never signed into law, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 was passed at the federal level. This act classified any children's product containing more than specified amounts of lead as a banned hazardous substance.