



CITY OF

# PORTLAND, OREGON

OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

**Randy Leonard, Commissioner**  
1221 S.W. 4th Avenue, Room 210  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
Telephone: (503) 823-4682  
Fax: (503) 823-4019  
randy@ci.portland.or.us

## **Council passes resolution urging Congress to address toxic benzene levels** Council unanimously votes to ask Congress to tackle the inequality in federal law

Contact: Sara Petrocine  
503.823.3005

Portland, OR—Council Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution filed by Commissioner Randy Leonard urging members of Oregon’s Congressional delegation to remedy the inequality in federal law that gives the Northwest the nation’s highest levels of benzene, a toxic pollutant linked to cancer.

“Portland residents have as much right to breathe clean air as the rest of the country,” said Commissioner Leonard, “It seems ridiculous to have to point that out to the federal government. The resolution asks our Congressional delegation to work to reduce benzene emissions in our region.”

Benzene is a toxin found in gasoline and cigarette smoke. The Environmental Protection Agency found benzene to cause chromosomal abnormalities and cancer, while the World Health Organization noted that “no safe level of exposure [to benzene] can be recommended.”

Portland’s levels of benzene are almost twice that of the national average because Portland’s air is considered just clean enough not to trigger federal regulation. This results in far more toxic benzene in the air than in other places and is augmented by the benzene-rich Alaskan oil burned in Portland.

“This is a no-brainer,” said Commissioner Leonard, “Almost every other state in the country already regulates benzene emission levels. We are not asking anyone to reinvent the wheel.”

Commissioner Sam Adams co-sponsored the resolution.

###