

# SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **In County's Ongoing Effort to Protect Waterways, Local Law Takes Effect to Prohibit Sale of Damaging Chemicals**

**Suffolk County, NY** –Suffolk County consumers purchasing additives to deodorize sanitary holding tanks in boats or recreational vehicles will have to test out some different products now as a new law took effect earlier this week that prohibits the sale of six chemicals known to damage sewage treatment facilities and negatively affect surface and ground waters.

IR 1020-2016, sponsored by Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. was approved unanimously by the Suffolk County Legislature in April of this year and became law on August 22, 2016. The bill, which comes in response to a Town of Huntington Resolution urging both Suffolk and Nassau Counties to take action, restricts the sale of tank additives containing formaldehyde, paraformaldehyde, bronopol, dowicil, glutaraldehyde, or para-dichlorobenzene in Suffolk County.

"With effective alternative options readily available, it was logical to pass this local law and end the practice of introducing toxic chemicals into our environment," stated Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. "I hope Nassau County will join in this effort by passing similar provisions to protect our precious water resources in the Long Island Region."

"I would like to thank Legislator Spencer for his environmental stewardship and partnership by moving this forward on behalf of the boating community across Suffolk County." said Huntington Town Councilwoman Tracey Edwards.

A number of products are currently being sold throughout the United States which contain harsh formaldehyde based chemicals, despite evidence determining that their use may come at an environmental and fiscal cost to municipalities. When used in recreational holding tanks and then introduced at sewage treatment plants, the additives can kill off necessary "good" bacteria that play a critical role in the treatment process. This can result in a less effective treatment process that diminishes the quality of water being reintroduced into local waterways, and can create clogs and backups that cause incompletely treated sewage to come to the surface, or leach into rivers, streams, and the aquifer.

"Suffolk County has made great efforts toward improving methods of sewage treatment throughout the County, therefore, it makes sense to ban the sale of sanitary waste holding tanks chemicals that impede the sewage treatment process," said Dr. James Tomarken, Commissioner of Health Services.

“Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) applauds Suffolk County and Legislator Doc Spencer for their continued commitment to protecting Long Island’s drinking and surface waters. Formaldehyde, when used as an additive in septic holding tanks, kills beneficial bacteria needed to properly break down waste and can cause septic systems to fail. We know that nitrogen pollution from our failing sewage and septic systems threatens our environment, health, and local economy. Formaldehyde, a known carcinogen and neuro-toxic substance, puts people at higher risk for cancer and damage to the nervous system, including diminished IQ and developmental problems in children. By simply switching to holding tank products in RVs and boats that don’t contain formaldehyde, residents will be taking a small step that goes a long way towards protecting our water resources,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of CCE. “In the year 2016, there is no need to put our water quality and public health at risk because we are continuing to allow dangerous, antiquated chemicals in such an unrestrained manner.”

Over the years, eco-friendly enzyme based options have become available that are comparable in effectiveness and price and do not contain formaldehyde or other precarious chemical derivatives. As these additives have become more common and the detriments of utilizing formaldehyde based additives have become widely known, the boating community has joined environmentalists in supporting this change to protect our waterways and the health of Long Islanders.

“Boaters want to do the right thing and protect the health of our waterways. We fully support this law as it will ensure that the products we use will not do harm to the natural resources that are vital to our way of life.” commented Jackie Martin, Executive Officer and Liaison for the Greater Huntington Council of Yacht and Boating Clubs.

“The AMI is pleased to support this bill. We feel it is a positive step forward to protect our waterways, and as always boaters across Long Island are stewards of the environment and want clean waterways for the public to enjoy.” said Eric Kreuter, President of the Association of Marine Industries.

The Suffolk County Health Department is charged with enforcing the provisions of the law, which if violated, is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 for the first infraction and up to \$1,000 for subsequent violations.

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