



1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Mercury is a persistent and toxic pollutant that  
3 bioaccumulates in the environment; and

4 WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the  
5 United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have found  
6 that mercury is a naturally occurring element in the  
7 environment and is also released into the air through  
8 industrial pollution; mercury that falls from the air can  
9 accumulate in streams and oceans; bacteria in the water causes  
10 chemical changes that transform mercury into methylmercury;  
11 fish absorb the methylmercury as they feed in these waters;  
12 methylmercury builds up more in some fish than in others  
13 depending on what they eat, how long they live, and how high up  
14 the food chain they are; and

15 WHEREAS, The Illinois Department of Public Health  
16 recognizes that the developing nervous systems of fetuses and  
17 children could be damaged if exposed to even small amounts of  
18 methylmercury; at high doses, methylmercury can affect the  
19 central nervous system, causing such health problems as memory  
20 loss and slurred speech, and can cause kidney damage and  
21 failure and gastrointestinal damage; the possible health  
22 effects depend on how much methylmercury is stored in the fish  
23 and how much fish is eaten over a period of time; based on the  
24 amounts of methylmercury detected in predator sport fish in  
25 Illinois, it is unlikely that people would experience adverse  
26 health effects associated with exposure to high doses; and

27 WHEREAS, Forty-one states, including Illinois, have issued  
28 fish advisories that warn certain individuals to restrict or  
29 avoid consuming fish from bodies of water contaminated with  
30 methylmercury; and

31 WHEREAS, The FDA and EPA recommend that if you are

1 pregnant, planning to be pregnant, or a young child, you should  
2 not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because  
3 they contain high levels of methylmercury; and

4 WHEREAS, The FDA and EPA recommend that if you are  
5 pregnant, planning to be pregnant, or a young child, you should  
6 eat up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of  
7 fish and shellfish that are lower in methylmercury; and

8 WHEREAS, The FDA and EPA recognize that 5 commonly eaten  
9 fish that are low in methylmercury are shrimp, canned light  
10 tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish and that another commonly  
11 eaten fish, albacore ("white") tuna, has more methylmercury  
12 than canned light tuna and should only be eaten in amounts of 6  
13 ounces (one average meal) per week; therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
15 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
16 we urge commercial food markets that sell fish or shellfish to  
17 post a notice warning of methylmercury in fish and shellfish;  
18 and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the we urge the Department of Public Health  
20 to create a sample warning to be provided to commercial food  
21 markets incorporating the following points:

22 "Fish and shellfish are important parts of a healthy  
23 and balanced diet. They are good sources of high quality  
24 protein and other nutrients. However, depending on the  
25 amount and type of fish you consume, it may be prudent to  
26 modify your diet if you are pregnant, planning to become  
27 pregnant, nursing, or a young child. With a few simple  
28 adjustments, you can continue to enjoy these foods in a  
29 manner that is healthy and beneficial and reduce your  
30 unborn or young child's exposure to the harmful effects of  
31 mercury at the same time.

32 By following these 3 recommendations for selecting and

1 eating fish or shellfish, women and young children will  
2 receive the benefits of eating fish and shellfish and be  
3 confident that they have reduced their exposure to the  
4 harmful effects of mercury:

5 (1) Do not eat Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, or  
6 Tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.

7 (2) Eat up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of  
8 a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in  
9 mercury.

10 Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are  
11 low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna,  
12 salmon, pollock, and catfish.

13 Another commonly eaten fish, albacore  
14 ("white") tuna, has more mercury than canned light  
15 tuna. So, when choosing your two meals of fish and  
16 shellfish, you may eat up to 6 ounces (one average  
17 meal) of albacore tuna per week.

18 (3) Check local advisories about the safety of fish  
19 caught by family and friends in your local lakes,  
20 rivers, and coastal areas. If no advice is available,  
21 eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) per week of fish  
22 you catch from local waters, but don't consume any  
23 other fish during that week."