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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2004**

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**SENATE RESOLUTION**

**RESPECTFULLY URGING THE MERCURY REDUCTION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION TO  
PREVENT MERCURY POLLUTION FROM AUTO PARTS**

Introduced By: Senator Dominick J. Ruggerio

Date Introduced: June 22, 2004

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission has the mission to prevent  
2 human sources of mercury from contaminating the environment (air, water, soil); and

3           WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act passed by the General Assembly  
4 in 2001 has declared that mercury is a persistent and toxic pollutant that bioaccumulates in the  
5 environment, and mercury deposition has proven to be a significant problem in the northeastern  
6 United States; and

7           WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act prohibits the disposal of  
8 mercury-added products by means other than recycling or hazardous waste disposal as of July  
9 2005; and

10           WHEREAS, Convenience light switches and other auto parts may contain mercury, and  
11 therefore pose a threat to human health and the environment if improperly disposed of at the end  
12 of their useful life; and

13           WHEREAS, An estimated 890 pounds of mercury has been released from Rhode Island  
14 autos over the past 30 years and an equal amount could be released over the next two decades if  
15 action is not taken soon to recover the mercury from vehicles before they are scrapped; and

16           WHEREAS, The Mercury Reduction and Education Act exempts mercury-added  
17 components as contained in motor vehicles from the disposal ban (23-24.9-9) and collection plan  
18 (23-24.9-10); and

19           WHEREAS, The state currently has no system to address the need to collect mercury

1 added to auto parts before they are incinerated or otherwise released into the environment; and

2 WHEREAS, Mercury from auto parts threatens the health of Rhode Islanders, and the  
3 Rhode Island Health Department warns young children and pregnant or nursing women not to eat  
4 any freshwater fish caught in Rhode Island due to mercury contamination; and

5 WHEREAS, The state of Maine has successfully implemented a mercury switch  
6 collection program which has withstood legal challenges and is effectively collecting mercury-  
7 added switches for recycling; and

8 WHEREAS, An effective mercury product recycling system must be convenient and  
9 minimize costs to taxpayers and to consumers; and

10 WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should be responsible for ensuring proper handling,  
11 recycling and disposal of discarded products and that costs associated with consolidation, handling  
12 and recycling be internalized by the manufacturers; and

13 WHEREAS, A system of producer responsibility for the collection and recycling of  
14 mercury-added auto parts is the most effective and equitable means of keeping this toxic waste  
15 out of the waste stream and environment, while also providing and a powerful incentive for  
16 manufacturers to reduce toxins and re-design products for recycling; and

17 WHEREAS, Auto manufacturers should have the flexibility to act in partnership with  
18 each other, with state, municipal and regional governments and with businesses that provide  
19 collection and handling services to develop, implement and promote a safe and effective  
20 recycling system for mercury-added auto parts; now, therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
22 hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission to develop a plan to  
23 address the collection and recycling of mercury added auto parts in a manner that is convenient  
24 and minimizes costs to taxpayers and consumers; and

25 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
26 hereby respectfully urges the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission to submit to the General  
27 Assembly no later than January 30, 2005 a recommended plan, including any legislation  
28 necessary to implement the plan, for the collection and recycling of mercury- added auto parts  
29 that utilizes producer responsibility; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to  
31 submit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Chair of the Mercury Reduction Oversight  
32 Commission, and all of the commission members.

