



## Senate Concurrent Resolution 100 – Proposition 65 and Processed Meat

### **Summary:**

SCR 100 encourages the addition of “processed meat” to the Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to cause cancer. This measure allows Californians to make informed decisions about the products they choose to consume.

### **Background:**

The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, otherwise known as Proposition 65, was approved by California voters by a 63 percent to 37 percent margin. It is intended to protect drinking water sources from toxic substances and to require warnings in advance of exposure to those chemicals that may cause cancer or birth defects.

Under Proposition 65, the state is required to maintain a list of all substances known to cause cancer. Proposition 65 is administered by Office of Environment Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) and requires the agency to not only publish a list of chemicals and substances having a 1 in 100,000 chance of causing cancer or birth defects over a 70-year period, but to revise and republish the list in light of additional findings at least once per year.

Chemicals are added or removed from the official list based on California's analysis of current scientific information. The list is to include, at a minimum, "substances" referred to by Labor Code sections 6382(b)(1) or 6382(d), the former of which identifies by reference chemicals or substances listed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

In California, companies that sell products associated with these listed substances, either in combination with unlisted substances or alone, must provide “clear and reasonable” warnings on the label to inform consumers about the risk. Once a substance is listed, businesses are required to provide the warning within the next 20 months or must otherwise demonstrate that the anticipated exposure level will not pose a significant risk of cancer.

### **Problem:**

A 2015 World Health Organization (WHO) report made clear that the consumption of processed meat, much of

which contains nitrates or nitrites, has been linked to colorectal cancer.

In 2015, IARC classified consumption of processed meat as “carcinogenic to humans” on the basis of sufficient evidence for colorectal cancer after assessing more than 800 epidemiological studies that investigated the association of cancer with consumption of red meat or processed meat in many countries, from several continents, of individuals with diverse ethnicities and diets.

Processed meat refers to meat that has been transformed through salting, curing, fermentation, smoking, or other processes to enhance flavor or improve preservation. Examples of processed meat include hot dogs (frankfurters), ham, sausage, corned beef, and biltong or beef jerky as well as canned meat and meat-based preparations and sauces.

Broad categories are not prohibited from the Proposition 65 list, which includes: alcoholic beverages, certain combined chemotherapy for lymphomas, emissions from combustion of coal, lead and lead compounds, oral contraceptives, tobacco smoke, and wood dust.

### **Solution:**

This resolution would make legislative findings related to harmful levels of exposure to processed meat, which is known to be “carcinogenic to humans.” SCR 100 would further urge the Office of Environment Health Hazard Assessment to comply with Proposition 65 and warn individuals of their potential exposure to this harmful substance by amending California Code of Regulations, title 27, section 27001(b) to add “processed meat (consumption of)” to the list of “chemicals known to the state to cause cancer.”

### **Sponsor:**

Social Compassion in Legislation  
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

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