



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

NYS Toxic Mold Task Force Established

LIZ KRUEGER November 25, 2007

Spitzer Administration Moves to Combat Health & Housing Concerns Raised by more than 21,000 NYC Residents

New York—State Senator Liz Krueger applauds Governor Spitzer for enacting the New York State Toxic Mold Task Force, an initiative signed into law by former Governor Pataki more than two years ago, which was never activated.

"This summer, I sponsored a sign-on letter which we sent to the Governor asking him to act to create this Task Force to ensure that this law was worth more than the paper it was written on," Krueger explained. "I then co-hosted a meeting with experts from the Governor's relevant agencies, as well as City agencies and experts from the field to discuss the problems and how to solve them. I want to applaud the Governor for moving so quickly in response to my concerns. Year after year, no matter what was happening to New Yorkers' housing and health, individual efforts to fight toxic mold were ignored. The problems of mold and its associated health effects are serious, and we hear regularly from constituents who don't know where else to turn as their home literally poisons their family."

Mold can pose a significant challenge to maintaining safe and healthy indoor health environments. Toxic mold can cause allergies, trigger asthma attacks, detrimentally affect the function of vital human organs, and increase susceptibility to colds and flu. Certain types

of mold have been identified as a major trigger of asthma, allergies and other respiratory problems, especially in children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems. These toxins can also have deleterious effects on humans when ingested, inhaled or when they come in contact with skin.

"Doing nothing is dangerous. Mold in one's house is like anything in nature—it will continue to grow and spread as long as nothing is done. Mold also does a great deal of harm to buildings and structures, placing far too many New Yorkers needlessly at risk," Krueger said.

In 2006, the City's 311 hotline received more than 21,000 complaints of mold, and the incidence of mold related actions filed in NYC Housing Court has increased dramatically in recent years.

The mandates placed upon the 14-member Task Force include:

Assessing the scope and magnitude of the adverse environmental and health impacts caused by toxic mold in NYS;

Measuring adverse health effects of exposure to toxic mold, including disproportionate risk to sensitive populations;

Assessing the latest scientific data on exposure limits to mold in indoor environments;

Determining control and mitigation methods that are environmentally sensitive and cost effective;

And Preparing a report to the Governor and Legislature with recommendations for actions by the Legislature and State agencies.

All 14 members of the Task Force have been named; the Task Force will be led by Dr. Nancy Kim of the State Department of Health and Mr. Thomas Mahar of the Department of State, and the first meeting will take place in early December.

"This is yet another example from the Spitzer Administration of what State government can do to serve the public good when time, resources, and most importantly, proper attention are paid to solving a problem. What we're talking about here is more than just a mere inconvenience or a cosmetic issue. Safe, sound housing is vital to the health and well-being of New Yorkers," Krueger concluded.

Co-signers on the letter to the Governor included Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum, State Senator John Sabini, Assembly Members Linda B. Rosenthal and Keith Wright, and Council Member Rosie Mendez.