



# CITY OF COSTA MESA

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Costa Mesa, California – Costa Mesa Resolution Calls for Ban on Dental Amalgam**

Costa Mesa has become the first city in America to endorse a ban on dental amalgam, the controversial filling material that is 50% mercury. Voting 5-0 late Tuesday night (October 19, 2010), the Costa Mesa City Council adopted a Resolution sponsored by Council Member Gary Monahan that calls on (1) Federal and State agencies to ban amalgam, (2) dentists in Costa Mesa to voluntarily switch to non-toxic alternatives in advance of State or Federal action, and (3) the other 33 cities in Orange County to adopt similar resolutions.

With emergence of alternative materials like composite, and the growing public alarm over exposure to mercury, a neurotoxin, amalgam has come into increasing disfavor. The State of California, via Proposition 65, has declared the mercury in amalgam to be a reproductive toxin. The Dental Board of California requires dentists to distribute a fact sheet to each patient disclosing amalgam's risks. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced this month that it will require dentists to install technology to catch split mercury, a step already taken by several Bay Area jurisdictions. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will hold hearings this December to consider banning amalgam for children and pregnant women.

Council Member Monahan says the Resolution "is good for consumers, good for dentists, and good for taxpayers". He notes that consumers have long been deceived by the term "silver fillings" and points to a 2006 Zogby poll that shows over 80% of Californians would pay more to get non-mercury fillings – if they knew. But only 40% knew that amalgam's main component is mercury.

Dentists and dental workers will benefit, Monahan says, because without mercury vapors, dental offices will be a much safer workplace environment, and because the ban-amalgam Resolution "sends a powerful message" to the insurance industry. "We will do all we can to change insurance contracts which currently favor amalgam use, a step that will accelerate the end of amalgam", he said. Taxpayers and water rate-payers will benefit as well because the main source of mercury in the wastewater, which must then be cleaned up, is dental mercury. "The solution to amalgam is ending its use at the source", according to Monahan.

Anita Vazquez Tibau of Costa Mesa, Director of Californians for Green Dentistry, praised the Resolution. "Amalgam is a primitive, polluting, pre-Civil War product with no role in 21<sup>st</sup> century dentistry", Vazquez Tibau said. "It's time to stop exposing our children to mercury from any source". She noted that a world mercury treaty is being negotiated, and added, "the Resolution calls on our Federal government to support a ban on dental mercury in international forums". Californians for Green Dentistry is a project of Consumers for Dental Choice, [www.toxicteeth.org](http://www.toxicteeth.org), the national organization seeking an end to mercury amalgam. For further information, please call Ms. Tibau at (310) 923-4116 or Council Member Monahan at (949) 533-1433.

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