



Weitz & Luxenberg Condemns Energy Bill

New York law firm Weitz & Luxenberg is dismayed at the House of Representative's approval of an energy bill that protects major oil companies from water contamination lawsuits stemming from the gasoline additive methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE).

([PRWEB](#)) April 24, 2005 -- New York law firm Weitz & Luxenberg is dismayed at the House of Representative's approval of an energy bill that protects major oil companies from water contamination lawsuits stemming from the gasoline additive methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE). The bill also gives \$2 billion to oil companies to help them foot the cost of phasing MTBE out of their products.

In the late 1970's, the oil industry began adding MTBE to its gasoline to act as an octane booster. In 1990, the Clean Air Act stipulated that oil companies must oxygenate gasoline to reduce air pollution. Given their choice of oxygenates, oil companies stuck by MTBE, which was a profit-making by-product of their own refinery processes, despite the availability of non-polluting oxygenates such as ethanol, the use of which would have benefited the American farmer.

MTBE is highly water-soluble, resists biodegradation, and moves rapidly in groundwater. If MTBE escapes from its container via a leak or spill, it actively seeks out and contaminates groundwater. Once MTBE has contaminated a drinking water source, its chemical nature makes it extremely difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to remove. Even small amounts of MTBE can render an entire community's groundwater supply undrinkable, with an unpleasant turpentine-like taste and odor. The Environmental Protection Agency has called MTBE a potential human carcinogen.

Oil companies argued that lawsuits brought by plaintiffs demanding that the companies pay for the cost of MTBE cleanup are unfair, and that the accountability for shouldering the cost of cleanup should fall on those directly responsible for the spills, not the makers of oxygenated gasoline products. Gasoline products from several companies are often run through common pipelines before they end up at gas stations or underground storage tanks. If these pipelines or storage tanks leaks, the results can be disastrous to a community's groundwater supply.

Weitz & Luxenberg, a leading player in MTBE litigation, represents several water systems nationwide. On April 20, 2005, the firm won a major victory in Manhattan's Federal District Court when Judge Shira A. Scheindlin ruled that oil companies including Exxon Mobil Corp., BP PLC, Sunoco Inc., and Amerada Hess Corp., must defend dozens of lawsuits accusing them of polluting groundwater with MTBE. The lawsuits seek to hold oil companies responsible for the significant cost of MTBE cleanup in communities' water supplies.

The House-approved energy bill will be enacted only if the Senate can pass legislation that both chambers agree on. If the bill passes both chambers, President Bush will most likely sign it into law. The bill reflects many of the President's energy priorities, including massive tax breaks for the oil and gas industry and opening the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico up to drilling for oil.

People who are concerned about the MTBE pollution in their community may visit Weitz & Luxenberg's corporate website, www.weitzlux.com, to read the contents of the House energy bill. Interested parties may also call the firm's Client Relations Department at (800) 476-6070, or email them at clientrelations@weitzlux.com for more information about filing an MTBE lawsuit.



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