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## 7. Pesticide Policy Debates

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- Objectives:
- To increase understanding of federal and state roles in pesticide regulation, and weaknesses of present regulation and enforcement.
  - To build understanding of the risk/benefit basis of pesticide regulation, and implications for public policy decision-making.
  - To build understanding of the vocabulary and complexity of pesticide use issues.
  - To promote student involvement in pesticide use decisionmaking in their own community.
  - To build persuasive writing and presentation skills.

Activities:

- Conduct** 2-person team debates on various aspects of pesticide issues (or have students choose positions and write an opinion piece designed to persuade others). Choose positions to defend. If issues are current and/or relevant in your community, all the better!
- Consider** using the materials developed in these classroom debates as the basis for presentations to local city councils, county boards, etc. who might be making pesticide policy decisions.
- Adapt** your position papers and submit them as letters to the editor of your local or school paper as appropriate and relevant.

Resources: Contact NCAP for more information about the pesticide topics listed below (or others.) NCAP, PO Box 1393, Eugene, OR 97440. (541) 344-5044. Or visit our Web site at [www.pesticide.org](http://www.pesticide.org).

Possible Topics:

- 1) Is the present risk/benefit basis of pesticide regulation adequate (or ethical or legal?) to protect the public health?
- 2) Can or should a government entity such as a county or state place a monetary limit on how much it can be sued for, if a private individual is damaged by pesticide use licensed and conducted by that entity (e.g., if a county road crew sprays a road, and the farmer in the adjoining field loses a crop because of drift, or the farmer's water supply is contaminated by the runoff)?
- 3) Is it appropriate or necessary (or legal) for a city to aerially spray malathion to control mosquitoes (or medflies) in an urban setting?
- 4) Should posting and notification of pesticide use be mandatory in public buildings and parks (public right-to-know issue)?
- 5) Should pesticide use in public schools (or parks) be prohibited or restricted (involuntary exposure/bodily integrity issue)? Is there a constitutional or other legal right to be free from toxic exposure in public buildings or spaces? How do compulsory school attendance laws affect this debate?
- 6) Should landlords have the right to apply pesticides in housing units over the objections of tenants (prior informed consent issue)?
- 7) Should cancer-causing pesticides be allowed to be used on food?
- 8) Should grocery stores be required to label produce bins or post signs notifying customers of fungicides in the waxes used on produce, or of other post-harvest pesticide treatments made during storage, processing or transport of the foods they sell (right-to-know issue)?
- 9) Should a public school be able to continue using pesticides or certain cleaning products if a student who attends the school becomes very ill when exposed to those products? See activity 10 for some background reading on this condition, known as multiple chemical sensitivity.
- 10) Should pesticide manufacturers be required to list all of the ingredients of pesticide products on the labels, and to provide product composition information to people who ask for it?