

# Local widow fights to repeal asbestos-ridden state rock

**Carley Dryden, Redondo Beach Reporter, 8-12-10**

Linda Reinstein lost her husband, Alan, to mesothelioma in 2006. Now the Manhattan Beach resident is one step closer to getting the cause of his death repealed as the state rock of California.

Asbestos-veined serpentine was designated the state rock of California in 1965 to promote the lucrative asbestos industry. Every year, 10,000 people in the U.S. and 100,000 people worldwide die from diseases, like mesothelioma, caused by asbestos, which has been banned in 52 countries. California has the highest recorded number of asbestos-related deaths in the country.

For the past two years, Reinstein and her 17-year-old daughter Emily have been raising awareness of asbestos-related diseases and urging lawmakers to "drop the rock" that symbolizes suffering and death to thousands of people and perpetuates a false message that asbestos is safe, Reinstein said. She helped draft SB 624, a resolution to repeal the rock that has been authored by Senator Gloria Romero (D-East Los Angeles) and supported by Assemblyman Ted Lieu (D-Torrance).

"This bill is about raising awareness to protect the health of our citizens," Romero said in a statement. "Serpentine contains asbestos, a known carcinogen. Toxic materials have no place serving as emblems for the state."

The bill was recently approved by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and is now on the Assembly floor, according to Lieu, the bill's floor manager.

Lieu said he wasn't fully aware of the severity of asbestos and the harm it could cause until he spoke with Reinstein.

"I believe symbolism can be very important. We shouldn't have a symbol that represents California that also has asbestos in it," Lieu said.

Last year, Manhattan Beach became the first city to formally request that the state legislature repeal the rock.

"You start with a rock," Councilman Nick Tell said last year. "But it increases awareness to a level that hopefully, ultimately, not just simply bans a rock, but bans a disease."

Though she has faced opposition from geologists and those in the asbestos industry, Reinstein forges ahead in her mission. She co-founded the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization in 2004 and travels the world telling her story and educating people about the disease. She said the mission of the organization and her efforts is not to litigate, but educate, with an emphasis on those who have lost their life to the diseases.

"This bill is about people, not rocks," she said.

Emily Reinstein said most of her friends don't know what asbestos is and can't even pronounce mesothelioma.

When she tells her friends that the asbestos in serpentine is a known carcinogen, they usually ask, "Why haven't we banned it?"

"That's a great question," Emily replies.

It often shocks people, she said, to hear about the effects of serpentine and asbestos, especially coming from a 17-year-old girl. But her reasoning is simple.

"My dad died from cancer and I'm trying to ban the thing that caused his cancer."