

# Official state rock is bad for your health, state senator says

**Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee, 6-21-10**

Serpentine may be stripped of title as official state rock – it's unsafe

Oops! A state senator says there's something very wrong with serpentine, California's official state rock: It's bad for your health.

Sen. Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles, has proposed legislation to strip serpentine of its title because exposure to chrysotile asbestos, a cancer-causing mineral inside it, can increase risk of lung disease, she says.

"California should not designate a rock known to be toxic to the health of its residents as the state's official rock," says Romero's legislation, Senate Bill 624, which is scheduled to be heard today by the Assembly's Natural Resources Committee.

Because of serpentine's potential health risks, the Air Resources Board restricts its use as unpaved road surface material, according to the state Department of Conservation.

The Golden State gave serpentine its title back in 1965, and it was the first state to do so, according to the California State Library. Romero's legislation would leave the state without an official state rock.

But Californians might not notice because the state has nearly three dozen other titleholders – including an official state fish (golden trout), an official state grass (purple needlegrass) and an official state fossil (the saber-toothed cat).