

# EDITORIAL: Chemical industry insider speaks out

By The Bee Editorial Board

Parents tell their children that no matter what bonehead stunt they pull, they'll make it worse by lying.

Perhaps some American Chemistry Council and corporate executives whose companies produce certain types of flame retardants didn't learn that lesson.

Senator Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, is carrying legislation to inform consumers of toxic flame retardants in products. | Hector Amezcua Sacramento Bee File Photo

The chemistry council denied involvement with an AstroTurf group known as Citizens for Fire Safety, an industry front that lobbied against legislation to restrict what Gov. Jerry Brown calls "toxic flame retardants." The chemicals had become ubiquitous in the environment and showed up in mothers' breast milk.



Last month, industry lobbyist Grant Gillham wrote a powerful letter to the California Legislature detailing how he established the front group in 2007 at the request of the American Chemistry Council and three member corporations that produce the flame retardants.

"My role, at the direction of the three companies, and under the oversight of the American Chemistry Council, was to develop a national advocacy and grassroots public relations campaign to defeat the growing body of legislation aimed at banning chemical flame retardants," writes Gillham, a former legislative aide.

In 2012, as Gillham oversaw a lobbying effort that derailed bills in several states to restrict flame retardants, the Chicago Tribune printed articles exposing Citizens for Fire Safety's questionable tactics and scientific claims.

The Center for Public Integrity picked up on the story earlier this month, focusing on Gillham, and reprinted a 2012 letter from the chemistry council's executive director, Cal Dooley, in which he told Maine legislators that the council "is not affiliated with Citizens for Fire Safety."

We must be missing some nuance. Maybe we don't know what the definition is of "is," as used by Dooley, a former Democratic member of Congress from Fresno. On Wednesday, Anne Kolton, the chemistry council's communications director, restated the council was not involved with Citizens for Fire Safety.

In 2012, after the front group had been exposed, Brown directed his staff to rewrite regulations so that California no longer required the flame retardants be added to furniture sold in the state.

Last year, Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, whose previous legislative attempts to restrict flame retardants had died in part because of Gillham, won approval of a bill requiring that products containing the flame retardants be labeled.

Now, with Gillham as an ally, Leno is carrying a new bill, SB 763, which would require labeling of products for juveniles such as napping pads. It deserves passage, no matter what the American Chemistry Council says.

In Washington, the chemistry council is lobbying for S. 697, a bill that threatens states' ability to regulate chemicals. California's congressional delegation should protect the state's authority by opposing this bill unless the preemption

language is dropped.