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Arsenic testing in residential wells passes Senate *SB 739 will require home sellers to test for additional chemicals*

SALEM – Arsenic will be added to the list of chemicals tested in residential wells under legislation passed today in the Senate. Since 1989, Oregon law has required that a seller of any real estate that includes a well that supplies ground water for domestic purposes must test for nitrate and total coliform bacteria. SB 739 will add arsenic to that list.

“Home buyers deserve to know what’s in their water,” said Senator Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland), chair of Environment and Natural Resources Committee. “This is a simple, inexpensive test that will give new homeowners the information they need to ensure their drinking water is safe.”

As many as 600,000 Oregonians rely on home wells for their drinking water. Scientific evidence has shown that exposure to low levels of arsenic in drinking water over long periods of time increases the risk of internal organ cancers.

“As an Oregonian who relies on a well for his own home, I know how important it is to know what is in your water,” said Sen. Alan Bates (D-Ashland). “This is a public health concern. Even though these are naturally occurring contaminants, home owners ought to know if they need to treat their water for impurities.”

Current law requires well testing results to be submitted to the Department of Human Services (DHS). SB 739 will make sure that these results are also submitted to home buyers. The bill also authorizes DHS to adopt rules to require additional tests of well water for specific contaminants in specific geographical areas of public health concern.

The bill will now go to the House for consideration.

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