2006 Turfgrass Advocacy

New York State Turfgrass Association • February 1, 2006

Background

A.2460 (DiNapoli)/ S.908 (LaValle) prohibits the use of certain pesticides, characterized by various EPA classification, for commercial lawn application, golf course application, residential application for ornamental purposes or turf pest control or for use by any state or local agency or school district for ornamental purposes or turf pest control.

A.1569 (Brodsky)/S.3738 (Oppenheimer) would allow for local regulation of pesticides beyond regulation afforded by state law and the Department of Environmental Conservation and which may be more stringent.

NYSTA Perspective

Green industry professionals subscribe to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a scientifically proven system of turf and landscape management which results in a marked reduction in the use of pesticides. IPM is successful because it acknowledges and accounts for an environmental system that is ever changing and complex in its dynamic make-up and relationships between its various components. More importantly, IPM education, provided in part by the Community IPM Program, is helping to change the concept of an ideal landscape from the "perfect" image of the past to a more "environmentally healthy" image with a high level of quality that accepts some non-harmful threshold levels of pests and diseases. IPM is widely adopted by turf and landscape managers. IPM encourages the landscape manager to evaluate and diagnose problems. The IPM approach is to look to cultural practices (mowing, nutrition, soil management, water management, etc.), and reduce reliance on pesticides.

Due to the lack of proven and reliable alternatives for pest management, these bills, although well intended, could do more harm than good. The use of carefully selected lawn and landscape protectants by professionally trained and continually educated certified applicators, at recommended label rates, is sometimes the only means to prevent major loss of lawn and landscape plants from pest pressures. This is even more critical in an urban setting where more plant stress and decreased pest migration sites can lead to catastrophic results. Without the availability of these tools, major loss and deterioration of local ecosystems is a disastrous possibility.

Furthermore, the role of state purview over pesticide usage policy is consistent across the United States and supported by case law. Allowing localities to enact their own pesticide laws and regulations beyond the Department of Environmental Conservation would lead to a confusing patchwork of conflicting requirements that would differ from municipality to municipality.

Lawn and landscape plants are not purely "aesthetic." In fact, their importance in the ecosystem is greatly increased in urban areas. Labeling them as solely aesthetic shows the depth of misconceptions and lack of proper respect for these areas of the environment. Lawns and landscapes: 1) convert carbon dioxide (CO_2) to Oxygen (O_2), 2) provide a cooling affect, 3) trap dust and dirt, 4) prevent erosion, 5) prevent runoff and provide groundwater recharge, 6) trap soil particles and pollutants for microbial decomposition, 7) provide safe play areas for family fun and sports. In addition to the environmental benefits, a good landscape provides other functions such as traffic management, and important security measures.

Sound science should be the basis for environmental legislation and regulation. Research has failed to provide a conclusive causal link between pesticide exposure and disease occurrences. In fact, an $8 million study by the National Cancer Institute, showed conclusively that those women who got breast cancer were no more likely to be exposed to chemicals than those who didn't get breast cancer. Also, the studies cited in the report reveal that some pesticides can cause tumors in lab animals when fed excessively high doses throughout their lifetime. Many respected toxicologists agree that these doses are many times higher than any possible level of human or pet exposure.

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Recommendation

- Oppose A. 2460 (DiNapoli)/ S.908 (LaValle)
- Oppose A.1569 (Brodsky)/S.3738 (Oppenheimer)
- Restore $300,000 allocation for Community IPM Program
- Provide $175,000 in state funding for research through the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund

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