

Drug disposal bill passes state Senate

A bill to establish a program for the disposal of prescription drugs was passed by the state Senate Monday on a 28-11 vote and now goes to the governor, who has 30 days to sign it or veto it.

"Our state ought to have a coordinated, environmentally safe program for disposing of drugs," said state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, the author of SB 966. "Most drugs are either flushed down the toilet or thrown in the garbage where they pose a threat to the environment and contaminate our waterways."

A 2002 study by the United States Geological Survey of 139 rivers and streams in 30 states found that 80 percent of them had measurable concentrations of prescription and nonprescription drugs.

Simitian said that without a safe disposal program, many prescription drugs may be left in medicine cabinets where they pose a threat of misuse or abuse. "Teenage abuse of pharmaceutical drugs has been a growing problem in recent years," he added.

The idea for SB 699 was suggested by Rebecca Kassel, a 17-year-old Santa Cruz County high school student, and by Abe Binder of Mountain View in Simitian's "There Oughta Be A Law" contest.