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## Maine to Consider Putting Warnings on Cellphones

By KATIE ZEZIMA  
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BOSTON — Maine legislators this month will take up the question of whether cellphones sold in the state must contain warnings that they may cause brain [cancer](#), despite a lack of scientific consensus on the issue.

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David Goldman for The New York Times

Despite conflicting evidence, a Maine legislator wants new cellphones to carry health warnings like those on cigarettes.

State Representative [Andrea M. Boland](#), a Democrat from Sanford, is pushing for the state to become the first to require cellphone manufacturers to put warnings on packaging, like those on [cigarettes](#).

Ms. Boland said she was convinced from what she had read that the radiation from cellphones increased the risk of brain cancer when held at the ear, especially in children under 18. She said she was swayed by a [2006 study](#) by the Swedish National Institute for Working Life that showed a correlation between [brain tumors](#) and heavy

cellphone use, and by [a recent report](#) by a retired engineer and consumer advocate, Lloyd Morgan, that compiled research showing that cellphones can lead to an increased risk of brain tumors.

Ms. Boland filed the bill in October, and a committee voted to hear it this month, a time typically reserved for emergency legislation. David Loughran, a spokesman for the State Senate president, [Elizabeth H. Mitchell](#), said the legislation was accepted as an emergency because there are over 900,000 cellphones in the state, “and if there’s a need to put these warning labels on them, doing it sooner rather than later is probably better.”

Despite this, Ms. Mitchell will not take a position on the bill until she sees “a more complete picture of the information” surrounding the issue, Mr. Loughran said.

[Gov. John Baldacci](#), a Democrat, also has not taken a position on the bill.

In San Francisco, Mayor [Gavin Newsom](#) plans to introduce an amendment this year requiring that cellphone packages in the city display the amount of radiation a phone emits.

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“The mayor believes that cellphone safety is the next frontier,” said Brian Purchia, a spokesman for Mr. Newsom, a Democrat.

If Maine enacts a law on cellphone warnings, it would be the first of its kind in the United States, where an estimated 276.6 million people use cellphones, according to [CTIA — the Wireless Association](#), the leading industry trade group. Some countries including [France and India](#) recommend limiting exposure to cellphone radiation.

The debate over the safety of cellphone radiation has been brewing for years, and there is a great divide on the issue. The [National Cancer Institute](#) says on its Web site that studies have not shown “any consistent link between cellular telephone use and cancer,” but cautions that “scientists feel that additional research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.”

The [World Health Organization](#) said in 2005 that studies had found “no convincing evidence of an increased cancer risk” from cellphones or their towers. But while many are awaiting the release of a more extensive study overseen by the W.H.O., The [Daily Telegraph](#) in London reported in October that the study would conclude that people who used their cellphones for 10 years or more were at an increased risk of developing brain cancer.

In July, Dr. Ronald B. Herberman, director of the [University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute](#), sent a memo to staff members warning them to limit their cellphone use and to use hands-free sets in light of a “growing body of literature linking long-term cellphone use to possible adverse health effects including cancer.”

Five months later, however, a [Danish study](#) reported that the rates of brain cancer in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden had remained stable from 1974 to 2003. The report was published Dec. 3.

The industry maintains that cellphones are safe. The [Federal Communications Commission](#), on its Web site, says that while government agencies are monitoring the latest scientific studies, “there is no scientific evidence to date that proves wireless phone usage can lead to cancer or a variety of other health effects, including headaches, [dizziness](#) or [memory loss](#).”

John Walls, vice president of public affairs for CTIA — the Wireless Association, said in a statement that “the peer-reviewed scientific evidence has overwhelmingly indicated that wireless devices do not pose a public health risk.”

Renee Sharp, director of the California office of the [Environmental Working Group](#), a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that is assisting San Francisco in drafting its guidelines, said companies should be required to disclose how much radiation their cellphones emit. The group has published on its Web site the amount of radiation certain cellphones emit.

“We’re urging the federal government to take a look at current radiation standards,” Ms. Sharp said.

In Maine, Democrats have a large majority in the House, and Ms. Boland said she was receiving support from fellow Democratic legislators for her

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measure. She said she used her cellphone "a lot less" than she used to, and now only on speakerphone or with an earpiece.

"The main thing is that the warning labels get on there, and when people go to purchase something, they have a heads-up that they need to really think about it," Ms. Boland said. "This is a big important industry, and it's a small modification to assure people that they should handle them properly."

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