



Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

Texas Press Release

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BILL BY SENATOR SHAPLEIGH TO BAN TRANS FAT IN TEXAS RESTAURANTS PASSES TEXAS SENATE

"Across Texas, a silent epidemic of obesity is shortening lives, raising health costs and putting more and more Texans at risk. With SB 204, we can make sure more Texans live strong—and healthy lives."

AUSTIN - Today, the Texas Senate passed a bill by Senator Eliot Shapleigh (D-El Paso) that would ban trans fat in Texas restaurants.

Most of the trans fat Americans consume is [artificial trans fat, which comes from oil that has undergone partial hydrogenation](#), a process in which hydrogen is added to an oil to make it more solid. This process is used in most margarine or shortening.

Saturated and trans fats raise levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol. In addition, trans fat lower levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, which leads to clogged arteries and increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. Trans fat also decreases HDL cholesterol, the body's "good cholesterol." Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health estimate that consumption of trans fat [causes 72,000 to 228,000 heart attacks, including roughly 50,000 fatal ones](#), per year.

Passage of this bill will go a long way in combating rising obesity rates across Texas. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, [nearly 66 percent of adults](#) in the state and 32 percent of high school students were overweight or obese in 2007. According to a Paso Del Norte Health Foundation report, more than 37 percent of El Pasoans were overweight in 2006 and another 27.2 percent were obese.

High obesity rates translate into enormous health costs from illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. [The Texas Department of Health has reported](#) that economic costs related to obesity could reach as much as \$39 billion by 2040.

"Across Texas, a silent epidemic of obesity is shortening lives, raising health costs and putting more and more Texans at risk. With SB 204, we can make sure more Texans live strong—and healthy lives," Senator Shapleigh said.

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The bill, [SB 204](#), amends the Health and Safety Code to prohibit Texas restaurants from packaging, storing or using trans fat to prepare or serve food. Under the bill, it would be required that all prepared and served food items contain less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Restaurants would be inspected for compliance as part of their regular health and safety inspections.

The ban would be phased in over the next few years. Franchises of 15 or more restaurants must comply by September of 2010. The bill will give franchises of less than 15 restaurants one additional year to comply. Contracts signed prior to September 1, 2009 for food wholly or partially prepared with trans fats are exempt for the length of the contract.

The bill exempts nonprofit organizations, volunteer fire departments, grocery stores, bakeries, private catering events and convenience stores with at least 50 percent revenue from gasoline.

Across the county, major restaurant chains and food companies have [already eliminated trans fat from their menus](#). Senator Shapleigh has worked closely with the Texas Restaurant Association and Texas Retailers Association to make sure the bill improves Texans' health without putting undue burden on Texas businesses.

"The Texas Restaurant Association appreciates the work Sen. Shapleigh has done to eliminate trans fats from foods served in restaurants, while assuring that the transition does not harm the industry. We support passage of S.B. 204 as amended," said Glen Garey, General Counsel for the Texas Restaurant Association.

"The Texas Retailers Association supports S.B. 204, as amended, to eliminate trans fats from food served in restaurants. We appreciate Senator Shapleigh's working with our association to address the concerns we raised on behalf of our members. We support passage of S.B. 204 as amended," said Ronnie Volkening, president of the Texas Retailers Association

The American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Cardiology, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, American Medical Association and American Public Health Association also support SB 204.

A companion bill to SB 204, [HB 1523](#) by Representative Carol Alvarado, has passed out of the House Committee on Public Health and has been reported favorably to the House Calendars Committee.

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