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Override lead veto

Lawmakers should get lead bill they passed on the books

The lead-paint remediation bill that the New York Legislature passed earlier this year was crafted to obtain bipartisan support. For the first time, this critical public-health legislation survived all the competition from other issues to pass both houses and make it to the governor's desk.

But last week, Gov. Paterson unwisely vetoed the legislation sponsored by Assemblyman David Gantt and Sen. Joe Robach, who each represent Rochester. The \$13 million cost — mostly in funds for landlords to remove the paint and the dust — is a factor in this time of fiscal stress and impending recession.

But the cost must be weighed against the positive impact this legislation will have on lives of children and families. In Rochester alone, thousands of children have suffered the effects of lead poisoning. The damage to developing young brains is often profound and irreversible. The city and Monroe County have taken steps to reverse the trend. But kids are still being poisoned — more than 400 last year. This bill would help end this scourge.

The Legislature, when it returns this month, should override this veto.

If the override is a nonstarter, lawmakers should commit to passing another lead paint bill next session. The momentum to get a remediation bill on the books must not be lost.

Paterson said he would present his own anti-lead program in next year's budget.

The better approach is to get the legislation already passed on the books. An override would accomplish that.
