

Asbestos victims angered by proposed settlement

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WASHINGTON - Lawmakers in Washington are considering a bill that would set up an asbestos trust fund but would also put an end to all jury trials for asbestos liability.

During a news conference at the state capitol Thursday, asbestos victims say the bill amounts to a bailout for companies who recklessly exposed workers.

"I was really looking forward to old age, and a few good years left, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen," said Frank Irvin, who is suffering from lung cancer caused by airborne asbestos particles. "I'm against this legislation because it's going to deprive people of their rights."

Frank Irvin was a carpenter in Denver for 45 years. Irvin, along with other asbestos victims and their families are calling on U.S. senators Wayne Allard and Ben Nighthorse Campbell to vote no on Senate bill 1125, sponsored by senators Orrin Hatch, R-UT and Bill Frist, R-TN.

Carolyn Benton of Greeley, who lost her husband to asbestos-related cancer in 2003 and Steve Sanchez of Saguache, who lost his father to the same illness, known as mesothelioma, also spoke at the news conference.

The Colorado Progressive Coalition, a state consumer protection organization, says that if the Senate bill becomes law, thousands of pending cases and settlements would be wiped out and payments to asbestos sufferers could be delayed for years because of a backlog in cases.