

Bickering derails lead paint bill

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ALBANY — Rochester lawmakers, who sponsored a state measure that would help reduce the number of children poisoned by lead paint, couldn't agree on the bill's exact language Tuesday, leading to its derailment.

The bills sponsored by Assemblyman David Gantt, D-Rochester, and state Sen. Joseph Robach, R-Greece, Monroe County, had only some minor wording differences, but that was enough to wipe out the deal.

Gantt said Robach introduced new language to thwart an agreement, while Robach accused Gantt of simply not supporting largely insufficient "clean-up" language.

"This bill is so important to me," said Gantt. "Most of those kids live in my neighborhood. For him to play this political game is not something I'm going to deal with."

Robach countered that the bill passed by the Senate late Monday was "all about trying to get it done to stamp out lead paint around the state." He said he had to make some concessions in order to get the bill passed by his Republican colleagues.

The measure would require

the state Health Department to pick 30 cities outside New York City with the worst lead-paint-poisoning problems and then develop strategies to reduce lead paint. Landlords would be offered tax credits to cover 50 percent of the cost to remove lead paint.

The effort was considered a positive step toward ridding upstate cities, including Rochester, of a nagging lead-paint problem that is linked to developmental problems in children through ingestion or through breathing in

lead-paint dust.

Advocates pushed to have a law enacted this session which was concluding Tuesday, though lawmakers may return later this year.

One of the main discrepancies in the Gantt and Robach versions of the bill was when the regulations would take effect, according to advocacy groups: The Senate bill would have enacted the regulations immediately, while the Assembly bill had a January start date. □

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