

Just before Christmas, the [NY Times](#) reported that Congress passed the Microbead Free Waters Act of 2015. The law bans nearly invisible small beads that have been added as abrasives to products like toothpaste. The trouble is that the beads get into waterways, where pollutants like PCBs adhere to their surfaces. Even more amazingly, the bill passed the Senate based on unanimous consent, with not even Ted Cruz objecting.

There were a couple of reasons why this law wasn't controversial. Illinois and California have already banned the beads; many other states are considering it; and even some counties have done so. The major cosmetic companies were already phasing them out.

Still, these days, even the least controversial measure almost always seem to get stuck in the legislative process and dies, if only because it's the perfect piece of legislation to which to add an anti-abortion rider. Remember this is a Congress that can barely manage to fund highway construction. So it still seems remarkable that this microbead legislation passed. (In fact, I worried for a few minutes that the reporter might somehow have been taken in by a story in the *Onion*, but I decided that probably wouldn't have happened at the *Times*.) The word miracle is probably a bit too strong — but still, it's a very nice and surprising way to end the year.