ADA's best management practices call on all dentists to use chair-side traps and (where compatible with the suction system used in the office) vacuum pump filters, and these standard control methods remove approximately 77 percent of the scrap amalgam from dental office wastewater. The waste amalgam captured by these devices can be recycled, rather than going down the drain.

"In addition to promoting scientific research into amalgam-related environmental questions, the ADA has also worked voluntarily with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help make greater amalgam recycling a reality. Together, we developed a national consensus standard to make amalgam recycling better and more universal. That standard is known as American National Standards Institute/American Dental Association Specification 109 ‘Procedures for Storing Dental Amalgam Waste and Requirements for Amalgam Waste Storage/shipment Containers.’ In developing this standard, we reached out to EPA, recyclers and other parties of interest. We now provide dentists with lists of available recyclers, and we advocate compliance by these recyclers with this new consensus standard.

“None of this would have been possible had ADA not also vigorously promoted its revised best management practices related to the profession’s health and safety make it clear: The government does not need to mandate amalgam separators, or other specific technologies or practices related to the profession’s environmental impact.

For further example, the U.S. EPA just recently recognized in a Federal Register notice, “It appears that the dental industry is already actively working towards voluntarily reducing its mercury discharges.”