

State officials putting off Clean Air Act action

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Regional and business leaders are getting nervous as the state House of Representatives delays voting on a local version of the Federal Clean Air Act.

"It doesn't have any support," said Rep. Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills, of the bill that is languishing on the House calendar after months of committee work.

Gov. John Engler supports a clean air bill, though reluctantly. "We're caught in a squeeze play — Washington mandates that west Michigan clean up its air by 1995 or face stiff sanctions," Engler said.

Service station dealers are opposing it. An aide to Rep. Mary Brown, R-Kalamazoo, says the bill is a must-pass measure that

needs an education effort.

Under the 1990 federal Clean Air Act, Michigan must clean up its air some more. The list of "non-attainment" counties is up to 10 and includes three near Lake Michigan — Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon.

The western counties are balking because they say their dirty air comes from the Chicago area. "Residents in this area should not be mandated to clean up problems over which they have no control," said Rep. Harold Voorhees, R-Wyoming.

Centralized tests

For the seven counties in southeastern Michigan, the federal law means they must reduce air emissions 15 percent below 1990 levels.

Currently in the tri-county area, 1,400 auto service stations perform the annual \$10-per-car chore of checking emissions levels. Under the Brown bill, advocated by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, centralized testing facilities would administer tougher emissions tests at a cost of about \$30 every two years. Local stations would lose the work.

"Asking consumers to wait for hours for the test, pay three times more for it and drive miles just to get one — all for a program that may not work — is ludicrous and bad policy," said Terry Burns of the Service Station Dealers Association.

If Michigan fails to meet federal standards, say SEMCOG chiefs, three bad things can happen:

■ The state can lose \$500 million in federal highway aid.

■ Smokestack permits for industries can be halted, throwing a monkey wrench in the state's economic recovery.

■ The federal government would impose its own program. In floor debate last month, Rep. Vincent Joe Porreca, D-Trenton, objected: "We're doing this for industry. It's not fair to my constituents to have to stand in line three hours so someone (industry) can be left off the hook."

"I don't much like this bill," added Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield. "I don't know if I'll vote for it, even if my amendments are adopted."

The bill was shoved aside late in July as the House passed 1994 budget bills and the school tax cut.

Bill supported

Michigan has until Nov. 15 to show the feds it is complying, and

the clock is running. SEMCOG is fighting back, charging the service stations with a "self-serving scare campaign based on half-truths." Joining with SEMCOG, the seven-county regional planning agency, are the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, the Michigan Association of Manufacturers, Michigan Chemical Council, Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Detroit Edison Co. and Consumers Power Co.

So are several environmental groups: Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Eastern Michigan Environmental Action Council and Sierra Club.

John Amberger, SEMCOG executive director, offered this rebuttal to the service station dealers:

"The current AET test is outdated and produces a false failure rate as high as 30 percent because

of significant engineering improvements in vehicles made in the past several years. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency changed with enforcing the Clean Air Act — will not count results of the current or basic AET program against the 15 percent required emissions reduction.

"If a significant portion of the 15 percent is not realized from this AET program, then severe and costly restrictions on industrial emissions will be required."

To the dealers' charge that drivers will face long waits for tests, Amberger said drivers in Minnesota, which has centralized tests, wait an average of two minutes.

Refer to House Bill 4166 when writing to your state representative, State Capitol, Lansing 48909.

Benefit square dance planned

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency will have a benefit square dance 8 p.m. to midnight Friday, Sept. 17, at the Dunham Ray Veterans of Foreign Wars post, 2422 W. Nine Mile Road in Southfield.

The required donation is \$6 per person. Proceeds will benefit county residents who need heating assistance. The event is hosted by callers Mike Brennan and Helen Covietz and the VFW Stars and Rainbow Strollers square dance clubs. Call 858-5126.

Job fair designed for laid off folks

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency will have a job fair 1-3 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 30, at the Royal Oak Township's recreation center, 21272 Mendota.

Admission is free. Attendees must be low-income residents of Oakland or laid off workers from any area. Pre-registration is required. Call 858-1649 or 541-6416.

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