

Environmental Quality Board  
Public Hearing  
Clean Vehicles Implementation Hearing  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

2006 MAR 27 AM 9:09

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Testimony by Michael J. Fedor, Executive Director  
Pennsylvania League of Conservation Voters  
March 20, 2006

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify before the board this evening. My name is Michael Fedor. I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania League of Conservation Voters. We are a state-wide nonprofit that works to educate Pennsylvania voters about the environmental records and positions of elected officials and to help elect pro-environment candidates to office. The primary interest of the voters I work to educate and bring out to vote year after year – including this year – is the future of this Commonwealth. I am here this evening to provide comments in favor of the DEP Clean Vehicles Program and its implementation because the League believes this program will in fact make this state cleaner, healthier and safer now and for our children.

I want to clarify what we're talking about. Some refer to this as the "California Clean Cars" program, but that seems to suggest we're adopting the same vehicle emissions program – top to bottom – that residents of California live under and that is not the case. PALCV believes this is the right step at the right time for Pennsylvania and we would be joining a healthy group of states who are already acting to clean up the air they breathe.

In fact, nine states besides California have chosen to adopt similar programs to the one we're all here to comment on this evening. All of these programs attempt to take the offense on this specific source of air pollution – the nearly 250 million motor vehicles on our nation's roads. These nine states are New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington.

Notice something about that list? Many of them are states some of us visit regularly because they are in our backyard. We drive our cars and SUV's to see their museums, their ski resorts, their waterfalls or their sports teams and 9 times out of 10, we don't think about the pollution we left behind in the trip.

These are not states on the fringes of environmental action. Five of those states have sitting Republican governors – two of whom are seriously considering running for President of the United States.

New York and Vermont have economies similar to ours, which focus on the service and agriculture industries. That is to say that fears over what these standards might mean for consumers in those states have been identified and assessed and the programs went forward. From private white-collar city dwellers who drive 40 minutes one-way to work to blue-collar, rural residents who work on their farms and drive 30 minutes to the nearest grocery store, anyone driving a vehicle on Pennsylvania roads is

adding to our air quality issues and therefore could benefit from a higher standard for the vehicles available for purchase.

If the actions of ten states is not enough to show the validity of this program, then know that because of the actions of the state governments of these ten states, 82 million Americans live under clean car programs. That's over a quarter of this country's population that is benefiting already from cars that use less fuel and emit fewer **tons** of pollutants into the air each day. Forty-eight million of these Americans live within a reasonable driving distance of Pennsylvania.

The question facing us now is whether our 12 million residents should benefit from the same forward-looking programs as our neighbors. The Pennsylvania League of Conservation Voters believes the citizens of this state want us to do more to stem the tide of pollution to our air. In 2003, approximately 47 percent of Pennsylvanians rated our air quality as fair or poor according to a National Conservation Trust study.

It's realistic to say in three years, it has not improved. There are more cars on our roads now than in 2003. There are more drivers on our roads now than in 2003 and commutes are NOT getting any shorter as our suburbs and exurbs explode in populations yet citizens continue to work in the cities.

The proposed clean vehicles regulations are a step in the right direction and provide an opportunity – an opportunity for Pennsylvania to be a leader on the environment again. To be at the forefront of a new way of doing business that benefits this country.

Is there a need to curtail vehicle emissions? Over a million Pennsylvanians suffer from asthma, which on a good day is an inconvenience and on a hot day in July when air pollution effects are felt at their greatest degree, can be debilitating to the young or elderly.

We can either let the federal government dictate a national standard from on high that does not reflect the reality here in Pennsylvania – or we – the citizens of this state who travel the roads, hunt in its woods, fish in its streams, hike in its parks, can make the determination on how we best turn the corner towards cleaner air sooner rather than later.

As a comment on where the voting public is today, many people vote with their dollars. Vehicles that would qualify for the Clean Vehicles Program the EQB is considering are already in production and sold in growing numbers across the United States. Some are even cornerstones of the 2006 model year, such as the Ford Escape Hybrid, which qualifies as a Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle. You might know the new Escape. Its marketing program features Kermit the Frog and the slogan "I guess it is easy being green." It is touted by Ford as "99.4 percent cleaner on average than an unregulated vehicle" and is the first hybrid built in North America.

Then there is GM's Flex Fuel program, which boasts a growing fleet of vehicles that burn the alternative fuel, Ethanol 85. GM claims this technology reduces dependency on foreign oil and reduces greenhouse gas and smog-forming emissions.

Do Pennsylvania consumers and voters want cleaner cars? The DEP Hybrid Electric and Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebate Program, which enables residents to apply for a \$500 rebate for purchasing a

hybrid car in Pennsylvania, and is about to run out of money early. Yet another sign that Pennsylvania consumers want more efficient and cleaner vehicles for sale in Pennsylvania.

**Recommendation:**

The people of Pennsylvania care about the environmental legacy we're writing for our children now. They want cars that go farther on a gallon of gas and pollute less in the process and they believe it should be done at the expense of the industry that makes the vehicles, not the taxpayers. There's your bottom line. We should expect the auto industry to do a better job of offering better products; of investing in better technologies that give us cleaner cars so the average consumer can drive to work, little league, the polling booth or the grocery store without adding to our problems in ways that are significantly preventable.

What's the cost of waiting another year to two or ten to adopt tougher emission standards?

Every day that passes without this program is one day longer our children will have to live in time where they'll wonder how shortsighted and selfish we all were for not doing something sooner. Every day that passes is adding exponential amounts of emissions into our air that cannot be recaptured.

The question before this body quickly becomes why shouldn't we join a quarter of this nation in making our air healthier, our state cleaner, and this nation safer by reducing our dependency on natural resources that come in the largest quantities from the most volatile portion of the globe?

If Pennsylvania is going to survive, then we've got to lead and stop finding every excuse in the universe not to.

PALCV and the voters who care about the environment ask you to implement a responsible and ambitious clean vehicles program in Pennsylvania.

Thank you and good night.

