

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.C.R. 177
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Environmental Regulation
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Under the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) revised ozone standard, one of the regulatory monitors in the Austin-Roundrock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is monitoring noncompliance by a slight margin. Governor Perry has recommended Travis County for nonattainment designation based on 2006-2008 monitoring data. By March 12, 2010 EPA is expected to make final nonattainment designations based on 2007-2009 data. EPA's default designation area is the entire five-county MSA, which includes Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties.

A nonattainment designation means that the air quality is considered unhealthy. A nonattainment designation triggers federal requirements for transportation and industry that can increase costs for businesses and delay federal transportation projects. The state must submit a planning document to EPA within 3 years of designation. Air quality improvements are not guaranteed.

If the region can complete the 2009 ozone season with a fourth-highest ozone reading of less than or equal to 77 parts per billion at the Murchison monitor, the region could monitor compliance of the revised standard before EPA makes nonattainment designations. To succeed there needs to be a strong regional effort and favorable weather conditions.

The "Big Push" is the region's initiative to keep ozone levels in compliance. Local elected officials of the regional Clean Air Coalition are spearheading the initiative, building on the successful voluntary efforts the region has implemented.

The Coalition is asking the state and local governments, businesses, and citizens to join the "Big Push" and voluntarily reduce ozone-forming emissions. Although individual actions may be small, many small actions will produce a large result.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.C.R. 177 directs all state agencies to initiate emission reduction policies and programs if possible in order to help Central and South Central Texas meet the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ground-level ozone. It also directs the secretary of state to forward a copy of the resolution to each state agency.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.C.R. 177 differs from the original by deleting a section of the resolution that encouraged state employees to attend an event that occurred in the past. It amends the RESOLVED section by directing state agencies to initiate voluntary policies and programs if possible. The original did not include "voluntary" or "if possible."