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PBN Editorial

Appeal of air rules is Motor City madness

Seriously? The big automobile companies are seeking a multibillion taxpayer bailout at the same time they are trying to block Rhode Island from adopting California's stringent emissions standards?

In an act that defies sanity as well as common sense and political acumen, General Motors, Chrysler and the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers have appealed the decision of Senior U.S. District Judge Ernest C. Torres to allow the tougher standards here.

That move comes just as the CEOs are telling Congress that all they need is a little bridge loan (\$14 billion was approved by the House of Representatives last week) so they can recast the American auto industry into a leaner, more nimble, greener version of itself. Greener is a huge component of the argument.

And yet, here they are arguing that Rhode Island does not have the right to try to make its air cleaner, because the standards are beyond those set by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. Sounds depressingly like the bad old car companies, the ones that waged war on higher fuel efficiency requirements and that put short-term gain ahead of long-term environmental – and it turns out – economic health.

This is an outrageous and indefensible position. And it should not be allowed to stand. Congress should insist that if the Big Three get taxpayer help, they will not be allowed to contest state requirements that will allow those taxpayers to breathe cleaner air and live healthier lives.

That will give them a head start on that leaner, greener future they keep promising. •