

NEWS

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Contact: John Wark (850) 321-6490

Florida Media Strategies

AUTOMAKERS FIGHT TO DELAY FLORIDA CLEAN CAR STANDARDS AS VOTE NEARS

Florida ERC urged to approve low emission standards on Oct. 29 – auto industry and climate change experts join clean air agencies and environmental groups in support of a “yes” vote without delay.

TALLAHASSEE, FL – With a critical vote only eight days away and automakers lobbying intensely against the measure, clean air and automotive experts joined environmental groups on Tuesday in strongly urging Florida officials to adopt low-emission vehicle standards like those approved by California and other states.

The Climate Action Team appointed by Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, who proposed the standards, has already figured greenhouse gas reductions from lowered emissions for cars and trucks into its recommendations on how the state should combat the causes of climate change.

Whether Florida makes such a reduction is largely up to the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission (ERC), which will consider

adoption of California's clean car standards on Oct. 29 in Tallahassee.

Supporters of the lower emission standards announced Tuesday that they have begun a petition drive using the popular Facebook internet site to help stir a grassroots effort in favor of adoption of the rule.

"This is a big test – how serious are we in Florida about reaching our goal to reduce greenhouse gases?" said Audubon Florida Conservation Director Eric Draper. "We hope the ERC will vote on Oct. 29 to support the governor's goals, but we also see great pressure from automobile makers on the ERC to delay.

"Delay has been the automakers' mantra on the federal level for decades" Draper noted. "As a result we still don't have new federal standards, we still don't have cars using readily available low-emission, high-mileage technology. Better federal standards have been delayed again and again since 1975 thanks to the automakers."

The delay makes little sense given the current economic crisis, said at least one large-scale auto dealer doing business in a state that has already adopted low-emission standards.

"Automakers should be investing everything they have in developing cars and trucks that don't just meet the California standard, but far exceed it," said Adam Lee, president of Lee Automalls, which includes 12 dealerships of domestic and foreign vehicles in Maine. "That's where the market is.

"It is unconscionable that they are spending any money to fight this Florida rule after taxpayers have just guaranteed them \$25 billion in loans. This is the taxpayers' money. If they still have money available to pay lobbyists, lawyers and "experts" to fight against the very rules that may save them then they should not accept any taxpayer funds."

A spokesperson for clean air agencies in the northeast where the standards are already in place said Florida consumers stand to enjoy clear benefits from a "yes" vote.

“With Florida’s adoption of a clean car program the state will continue to lead the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” said Coralie Cooper, transportation program manager for NESCAUM, a nonprofit association of air quality agencies representing six New England states.

“Florida will receive the cleanest, most advanced cars -- along with northeast states and California.”

If Florida fails to act and delays adopting low-emission vehicle standards, however, the state may have to look to make up the difference through further reductions in greenhouse gases emitted by electric utilities. That cost would likely be passed along to consumers.

On the other hand, if Florida adopts the California standards, the state is likely to cut more greenhouse gases than would occur under proposed federal fuel economy rules. Automakers argue Florida should delay voting and wait to see if those rules are approved and survive legal challenge.

According to Tom Cackette, a report issued by the California Air Resources Board estimated that between 2009 and 2016 the California standards would prevent emissions of 411 million metric tons of greenhouse gases in the United States. That’s 36 percent more than the 303 million metric tons estimated under the proposed federal fuel economy rules.

Cackette is chief deputy executive officer of the California Air Resources Board in Sacramento. He is responsible for the state’s program to reduce smog and greenhouse gas emissions for vehicles.

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To sign a petition urging the ERC to approve the low emission vehicle standards, and for more information, go to: www.Facebook.com

Sign in and type the search term: **“Yes to Florida Clean Cars.”**