



DEQ Emissions Testimony – Sen. Chuck Thomsen

In 1975, when Oregon launched its vehicle emissions testing program in the Portland area, carbon monoxide levels in downtown Portland rose above the national health standard an average of once every three days.

But it has been 26 years since downtown Portland has recorded a carbon monoxide violation. So much has changed -- automobile technology, fuels, driving habits. But one thing hasn't changed: vehicles in the Portland metro area still are required to pass an emissions test to get registration tags renewed.

According to DEQ's website, "Portland's air currently meets all federal air quality health standards. In addition, according to DEQ's most recent Air Quality Data Summary, The smog levels did not exceed the federal health standard in any Oregon community in 2011."

I sponsored this bill on behalf of my constituents who feel they are being forced to pay a fee that is no longer necessary. The Clean Air Act charges the EPA with setting air pollution health standards. But this means that regulators decide when their own jobs are finished. No matter how clean the air, it seems they will continue to find new unacceptable risks to maintain programs and fees that are no longer needed.

In addition, Washington has already passed legislation similar to this bill, which should be of particular interest to us because we share an airshed with Clark County.

According to Washington Statute 46.16A.060, motor vehicles that are 2009 year or newer are exempt from emission test requirements, and all vehicles will be exempt by 2019.

Yet in the Portland area: All 1975 and newer cars, trucks, vans, motor homes and buses powered by gasoline, alternative fuels (such as propane) or hybrids registered within the DEQ boundaries must pay their \$19 testing fee.

Portland is a place that finds great value in changing with the times, I believe the time has come to eliminate this increasingly unnecessary hassle for our citizens.

I am open to amendments and to the option of phasing the program out.

In addition, \$3 million was swept from this fund by the previous legislature, so I thought the option could be on the table to lower fees on both vehicles and industry equally to keep these funds from getting swept in the future.