

Bills seek more clout for capital on air board

March 3, 2005
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--Taking aim at one of the Sacramento region's most persistent problems, Assemblyman Dave Jones introduced a package of bills Wednesday meant to assist air pollution control efforts.

One of the measures, AB 1221, would expand the California Air Resources Board to include a representative from Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, El Dorado, Solano or Sutter counties.

Jones, D-Sacramento, said representation on the state board would give the region more of a voice in setting state policies for mobile air polluters - primarily vehicles - that account for the vast majority of local air problems.

Assemblyman **Roger Niello**, R-Fair Oaks, applauded the proposal.

"Voice is very important - especially if it's on the right side of the dais," Niello said.

Jones' other two pollution-related bills are:

* AB 1222, to create a statewide program that would use remote sensors to identify high-polluting locomotives. The federal government is responsible for regulating train emissions. Jones' goal is to produce statistics that could be used to persuade railroad companies to crack down voluntarily.

* AB 1220, designed to make it easier for local air pollution control districts to identify polluters and enforce regulations relating to portable engines, larger than 50 horsepower, that are used to power cranes, pumps and well-drilling equipment, among other things.

Jones said AB 1220 and AB 1222 target "free riders," which he defined as "polluters who are not doing their fair share to clean up the air."

The Sacramento Democrat's air board measure would raise from 11 to 12 the number of seats on the regulatory panel.

Five seats currently are reserved for representatives of regional air districts - one apiece for the Bay Area, San Joaquin, San Diego, South Coast (Los Angeles area) and one for a member from any other air district, Jones said.

The Air Resources Board's remaining six members hold expertise in specific areas such as automotive engineering, medical professions, science or law, Jones said.

Will Gonzalez, a lobbyist for the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, which is sponsoring AB 1221, said the Sacramento area is the largest region without representation on the existing board.

"For a region this size, that's so heavily (affected) by mobile pollution sources, it makes sense for us to be at the table where these mobile sources are addressed," he said.

But state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, said that designating more seats to specific regions could open a Pandora's box.

"We can't be so parochial that we only put our own areas on it," Florez said. "If that were the case, we'd have an air board with 80 members."

Florez said that adding another board member potentially could dilute the representation of other geographic areas.

If the state board is expanded, Florez said he would like to see the new member represent asthma victims or other such stakeholders, not a specific geographic area. The Bee's Jim Sanders can be reached at (916) 326-5538 or jsanders@sacbee.com.