

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE  
Revised

House Bill 823 (Delegate Clagett. *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

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**Task Force on the Environmental Effects of MTBE**

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This emergency bill establishes a 16-member task force to determine and assess the environmental and health risks associated with ground and surface water contamination by methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE). The task force must examine preventative and corrective actions that are being taken at the national and regional levels, recommend a plan to minimize and counteract the risks associated with MTBE, and explore alternatives to MTBE which can be used to reformulate gasoline to reduce emissions and pollutants. Staff support will be provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The task force must submit a preliminary report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2000. A final report is due by December 1, 2001.

The bill sunsets at the end of June 30, 2002.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Administrative costs, including expense reimbursements for task force members, are estimated at \$3,200 a year for two years. It is assumed that these costs could be handled with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Background:** Federal law mandates the addition of oxygenates in reformulated gasoline to reduce the concentration of various types of air contaminants in regions of the country exceeding federal National Ambient Air Quality Standards. MTBE, the most commonly used gasoline oxygenate in the United States and Maryland, is being detected with increasing frequency in surface and groundwater throughout the United States due to leaking underground petroleum storage tanks, spills, and other accidental discharges. In 1998, the EPA formed a blue ribbon panel to investigate concerns raised by the discovery of MTBE in some water supplies due to public health concerns. The panel recommended in July 1999 that the EPA work with Congress and the states to implement reforms to ensure that water supplies are better protected. The panel made the following recommendations:

- substantially reduce the use of MTBE while ensuring no loss in air quality benefits;
- enhance public drinking water monitoring and remediation programs;
- enhance enforcement of underground storage tank replacement and upgrade programs; and
- enhance public education and clean-up programs for gasoline spills.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of the Environment, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 18, 2000  
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