

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Joint Resolution 1 (Senator Hollinger, *et al.*) (Chairman, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Rules and Executive Nominations

Sewage Treatment Plants - Nitrogen Reduction Technology - Federal Funding

This joint resolution urges the U.S. Congress to enact legislation during the 108th Congress in support of funding for the installation of nitrogen reducing technology by Chesapeake Bay watershed sewage treatment plants.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Compliance with this joint resolution would not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: According to the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP), nitrogen pollution is the most serious problem facing the Chesapeake Bay today. Each year, roughly 300 million pounds of nitrogen reach the Bay. Nitrogen pollution results in excessive algae growth that clouds water, depletes oxygen, and impacts bay grasses, fish, and crabs.

As part of the Chesapeake 2000 agreement, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia committed to reduce nitrogen to levels that will remove the Bay from the federal impaired waters list. According to CBP, the latest science suggests that as much as half of all nitrogen entering the Bay will have to be eliminated to fulfill that commitment. By upgrading all the large sewage treatment plants in the Bay watershed

with nutrient removal technology, it is estimated that 42 million pounds of nitrogen could be removed annually.

According to the Chesapeake Bay Commission, in order to fulfill the Chesapeake 2000 commitments relating to water quality, Maryland will need to spend an estimated \$3.9 billion. This estimate is not limited to costs to upgrade wastewater treatment plants; it also includes costs for nutrient and sediment reductions from agricultural lands, septic systems, and new and retrofitted stormwater measures. Improvements at wastewater treatment plants represent more than one-third of the total financial burden, however.

In an effort to facilitate the upgrade of these sewage treatment plants, both in Maryland and watershed-wide, U.S. Senators Sarbanes and Mikulski, along with Senators Warner and Allen from Virginia and Senators Specter and Santorum from Pennsylvania, introduced federal legislation during the 107th Congress to provide 50:50 grants to approximately 300 wastewater treatment plants to install nitrogen reduction technology. The legislation would have provided \$132 million annually for five years to the six states in the Bay watershed. Identical legislation was introduced in the House. Hearings were held on the Senate bill, but no further action was taken. The federal legislation is expected to be reintroduced during the 108th Congress.

There is a resolution pending before the Virginia legislature that urges the U.S. Congress to adopt legislation during the 108th Congress in support of nitrogen removal technology. Both the Virginia House and Senate have reported the resolution favorably out of committee. A complementary resolution has been prepared for introduction in the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HJ 7 (Delegates McIntosh and Wood) – Rules and Executive Nominations.

Information Source(s): Chesapeake Bay Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 5, 2003
mam/jr

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