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Senate Bill 1171 (as introduced 4-27-04)
Sponsor: Senator Gerald Van Woerkom
Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

Date Completed: 6-7-04

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 89 (Littering) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to include abandoned vehicles in the definition of "litter".

Part 89 prohibits a person from knowingly dumping or leaving litter on public or private property without the consent of the property owner. Violators are subject to civil fines ranging from \$800 to \$5,000, depending on the volume of the litter and whether the violator is a repeat offender. In addition, a court may require a violator to pay the cost of removing the litter and/or perform community service in the form of gathering litter.

"Litter" is defined as rubbish, refuse, waste material, garbage, offal, paper, glass, cans, bottles, trash, debris, or other foreign substances. The bill would add to this definition a vehicle that was considered abandoned under Section 252a of the Michigan Vehicle Code (which defines "abandoned vehicle" as one that has remained on public or private property for a period of 48 hours after a police agency has affixed a written notice to the vehicle).

The bill provides that, in a proceeding for a violation of Part 89 involving litter consisting of an abandoned vehicle, proof that the vehicle described in the citation, complaint, or warrant was abandoned, and that the defendant named in the citation, complaint, or warrant was the titled owner or lessee of the vehicle at the time it was abandoned, gives rise to a rebuttable presumption that the defendant abandoned the vehicle.

Under Part 89, in a proceeding that involves littering from a vehicle or vessel, the owner, lessee, or driver of vehicle or vessel from which litter was thrown is presumed to be responsible for the litter. This presumption does not apply if a person is assessed a civil fine for littering. The bill would delete this exception.

MCL 324.8901 et al.

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the State. Civil fines may be imposed by a court on violators of this part and are based on the volume of the litter. The fine for an abandoned vehicle could be up to \$2,500 for the first violation and up to \$5,000 for subsequent violations. Civil fines are deposited into a settlement funds account.

Fiscal Analyst: Jessica Runnels

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.