

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rural citizens say “Yes” to Clean Cars

ST. PAUL, MN, February 26, 2020 – Today, the Minnesota State Senate’s Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Committee is meeting to introduce a bill that revokes the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s (MPCA) authority to set standards for auto emissions. This specifically targets MPCA’s ability to adopt a Clean Cars Standard. Minnesotans for Clean Cars, a statewide coalition, is advocating for the adoption of a Clean Cars Standard by the MPCA. Some lawmakers argue that a Clean Cars Standard would be harmful to rural Minnesota. Many rural Minnesotans strongly disagree and wonder why some Minnesota leaders are trying to stop a measure that will save Minnesotans money, improve air quality and health, reduce climate pollution, provide more vehicle choice, and help all Minnesotans be part of a clean energy future.

Long commutes are an everyday reality for many in Minnesota. Pete Kennedy is an engineer who lives in Murdock. He has a 70-mile round trip daily commute that he makes in his plug-in 2017 Chevy Volt and wants Minnesota to adopt a Clean Cars Standard. He commented, “It only makes sense to put the highest mileage vehicles where we drive the most miles, rural Minnesota, and the MPCA Clean Car Standard would do just that.” Kennedy continued, “The Volt is a plug-in hybrid with a battery for commuter length trips and a gasoline engine for longer trips. It’s not an expensive luxury car. We bought it because it was affordable, and we needed a dependable car that gets us where we need to go at a very low cost.”

Other people are frustrated by how hard it currently is to buy an electric car in Minnesota, especially in rural cities. Mark Peterson from New London is one of those people. Peterson noted, “I have no intention of buying a gas-powered car again. When I go to buy my next electric vehicle the offerings in Minnesota will make it difficult. Mills Nissan in Willmar does not carry the Leaf. There is clearly a demand for EVs in Minnesota, but the dealers and manufacturers are intentionally limiting our options.”

Poor air quality is killing thousands of Minnesotans each year, even in rural Minnesota. This is an often-overlooked reason why MPCA needs to be able to set strong auto emission standards. A 2019 report from MPCA and the Minnesota Department of Health found that rates of death attributable to air pollution were higher in rural areas than cities and was particularly bad in southern Minnesota and along the state’s border with South Dakota.

Rural Minnesotans know the urgency of all the issues a Clean Cars Standard addresses, and they want action NOW. Kennedy is not happy with the Senate’s interference in MPCA’s ruling making, “The MPCA’s authority to adopt the Clean Car Standard is clearly defined in state law. I have to ask, what’s been taking them so long? Instead of setting up roadblocks to the MPCA, the Senate should be urging them to complete their task post haste.”

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