

Legislative Analysis



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APA AMENDMENTS

House Bill 4240

Sponsor: Rep. Ken Goike

Committee: Regulatory Reform

Complete to 5-17-11

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4240 AS INTRODUCED 2-10-11

House Bill 4240 would amend the Administrative Procedures Act to add the following restrictions for state agencies when adopting new rules and regulations.

****A state agency would be prohibited from adopting a rule more stringent than federal standards unless specifically authorized by statute.**

****In implementing a federal program, a state agency would be required to adopt the rules and standards as promulgated by the federal government unless statute allows for a more efficient process.**

****A guideline, operational memorandum, bulletin, interpretive statement, or a form with instructions would be considered advisory and not given the force and effect of law. A state agency could not rely on a guideline, operational memorandum, bulletin, interpretive statement, or instructions to support its decision to act or not act if that decision is subject to judicial review. Additionally, a court could not rely upon a guideline, operational memorandum, bulletin, interpretive statement, or form with instructions to uphold an agency decision to act or refuse to act.**

****In instances where statute says a state agency can proceed by rule-making or by order, and an agency proceeds by order instead of rule-making, the order would not be given general applicability to those who were not parties prior to the proceeding or contested case before the order was issued.**

****A rule could not exceed the rule-making delegation contained in the statute that authorizes the rule-making.**

Currently when a state agency proposes new rules for small businesses and those rules will have a disproportionate impact on small businesses because of their size, the agency has to reduce the economic impact on small business by doing one or more of the following when it is lawful and feasible:

- Establish differing compliance or reporting requirements or timetables for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the compliance and reporting requirements for small businesses.

- Establish performance rather than design standards, when appropriate.
- Exempt small businesses from any or all of the requirements of the rule.

House Bill 4240 would rewrite this provision so that when a state agency proposes new rules for small businesses and those rules will have a disproportionate impact on small businesses because of their size, the agency would be required to consider exempting small businesses. If not exempted, the agency must reduce the economic impact of the rule by doing all of the following when it is lawful and feasible. (These factors must also be specifically addressed in the small business impact statement.)

- Identify and estimate the number of small businesses affected by the proposed rule and its probable effect on small businesses.
- Establish differing compliance or reporting requirements or timetables for small businesses under the rule after projecting the required reporting, record keeping, and other administrative costs.
- Consolidate, simplify, or eliminate the compliance and report requirements for small businesses under the rule and identify the skills necessary to comply with the requirements.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards required in the proposed rule.

Currently, if appropriate in reducing a rule's disproportionate economic impact on small business, an agency can classify small businesses as: (1) having 0-9 full-time employees; (2) 10-40 employees; or (3) 50-249 full-time employees. The bill would require the use of these classifications.

A proceeding to contest the validity of the processing of a rule on the grounds of noncompliance with relevant provisions of the APA would have to begin within two years after the rule goes into effect. Additionally, the act currently provides that unless an exclusive procedure or remedy is provided by statute, the validity or applicability of a rule may be determined in an action for declaratory judgment if the court finds the rule or its application interferes or impairs, or threatens to interfere or impair, the legal rights of the plaintiff. The bill would amend that provision so that the failure of an agency to accurately assess the impact of a rule on businesses, including small businesses, in the regulatory impact statement would also be taken into account in judging the validity or applicability of a rule.

This bill also allows a person alleging a violation regarding the processing of a rule to bring action for damages in the circuit court of the county in which the plaintiff resides or in the Ingham County Circuit Court. If a violation is found to have occurred, the court can award up to 10 times to the cost of any permit fees, as well as, the actual and reasonable costs for witness and attorney fees.

MCL 24.232, et al.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would increase the costs of processing administrative rules by the several departments and agencies. While current law requires departments and agencies to consider the impact of proposed administrative rules on small businesses, the bill would require a more detailed review of proposed rules on small businesses (categorized by the number of employees) and further consideration of alternative means of compliance (including outright exemption) by small businesses. This provision would increase departmental and agency administrative costs by a relatively minor amount.

The bill also restricts the ability to departments and agencies to promulgate administrative rules that are more stringent than applicable federal standards. This provision would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and local units, depending on how it ultimately impacted rules promulgated by the several departments and agencies. Recent experiences with some agencies promulgating rules that have (or would have) exceeded the applicable federal requirements have yielded divergent opinions on the cost impact of those rules, with rules potentially resulting in cost increases on regulated industries (under one view) and cost savings (under another view).

The bill also expands the ability of affected interests to challenge the validity of administrative rules and be compensated for damages when an agency is found to have violated the APA's rule promulgation provisions. Making an agency liable for damages would tend to increase state costs, although the extent to which costs would increase isn't known. It's not immediately known how often rules are invalidated by the courts. The bill provides that the damage award would be up to 10 times the amount of any permit fees paid by the challenging party.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.