

# Brownfield

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## Want to raise taxes by \$79 Million Each Year? Governor Snyder does

On Tuesday, Gov. Snyder announced a proposal to spend \$79 Million annually on brownfield site clean-up, waste management planning, asbestos removal, recycling grants, water quality monitoring, and state park infrastructure.

These are all laudable goals – but one has to question – where is the money to come from? The Governor wants to raise a fee on garbage disposal by 1,200%

The Governor asserts that Michigan only recycles 15% of its waste (he'd like it to be 30%) and that "to reduce waste in Michigan landfills" he'd like to increase the "surcharge" currently imposed on landfills from \$0.36 per ton to \$4.75 per ton. Presently, this surcharge (which was the result of negotiations between the State and industry) provides funds to the State's Solid Waste Management Fund which helps fund permitting and licensing of landfills and other solid waste management facilities, inspections, permit and license enforcement, monitoring, and inspections of landfills and solid waste management facilities. In short, the surcharge pays (along with other fees paid by the industry) for the permitting and regulation of the facilities paying the fee.

One has to wonder why landfills should be paying:

- ▶ \$45 Million each year to remediate and redevelop existing and future contaminated sites which in most cases have nothing to do with regulated and permitted landfills;
- ▶ \$5 Million each year for water quality monitoring grants which definitely have nothing to do with landfills;
- ▶ \$5 Million each year for state park infrastructure which, again, are unrelated to landfills.

Isn't that why we pay taxes? Shouldn't *those* regulated communities pay the costs which have nothing to do with landfills? Also, there is a State superfund law (Part 201) that requires polluters to pay for their pollution.

One can argue that paying \$9 Million for local governments' solid waste planning and \$15 Million for grants to municipalities to support recycling should be covered by the State's general fund, as well, as those functions have nothing to do with regulating those who pay the fee. When you go to get your driver's license, would you want to be charged an additional \$100 to pay for the roadside cleanup of stuff like tires and debris? It is tangentially related to driving so, does that make it OK?

There is Michigan Constitutional law that says that the answer is "no" and that this "fee" is a disguised illegal tax being snuck past the taxpayers.

Michigan voters have regularly approved bonds to fund remedial and other environmental expenditures, knowing that it was an investment in our health and economy. Why is Governor Snyder afraid to ask the taxpayers to do so again? Perhaps one word: Flint?

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