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Camp dismisses Bush administration concern about Canadian trash bill

By Daily News staff and The Associated Press

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Although Bush administration trade officials voiced concern about possible retaliatory action by Canada, Midland Republican Dave Camp says the Senate should quickly approve a bill on trash.

After Michigan raised a stink about Canadian waste filling its landfills, the House by voice vote Tuesday approved a bill that would allow states to reject household trash from other countries until the Environmental Protection Agency issues regulations on trash from Canada (See nearby story).

For more than a decade, Michigan residents have complained that trucks carrying Canadian trash clog their roads, cause environmental and health problems and create security risks because of the difficulty of screening trash for contraband.

"Not only is this waste an obnoxious substance, but it is a hazard to travelers," said the bill's author, Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., who chairs the Energy and Commerce.

The Bush administration raised concerns in a letter to congressional leaders Monday, noting that more than 32 states shipped hazardous waste to Canada in 2004.

The bill "could provoke reciprocal actions by Canada or other trading partners against U.S. waste exports," Bush trade officials wrote.

But Camp, in a prepared statement, said the bill "deserves to become law. It is well written and in no way does it violate our trade agreement with Canada. The House has done its due diligence in crafting this legislation to avoid any potential trade issues. Our senators should pass it and the president should sign it without delay. Every day they delay we are forced to accept more Canadian trash."

Michigan receives nearly 4 million tons of Canadian trash annually – about 350 truckloads a day – while another 300,000 tons enter Washington state and New York a year.

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed a measure last year to ban foreign trash, but the state needs congressional authority to enforce it.

Jonathan Sauve, a spokesman for the Canadian Embassy, said officials were concerned that Michigan's implementation of the federal legislation would violate trade agreements because the state exports both hazardous and non-hazardous trash to Canada.

"We still believe that the issue can be managed without resorting to legislation," he said.

Rob Cook, president of the Ontario Waste Management Association, said the legislation, if signed into law, would cause serious problems for the Canadian province because of a shortage of landfill space.

Michigan's Democratic senators, Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin, have not signaled whether they will push the legislation.