

State wins air-rule fight

California can go ahead with tough clean air laws

By Doug Abrahms, Washington Bureau of the Visalia Times Delta, November 25, 2003

WASHINGTON -- California defeated a congressional effort to prevent the state from mandating lower emissions from gas-powered lawn mowers, a rare win in Washington for the nation's smoggiest state in its efforts to reduce pollution.

Republican Sen. Kit Bond of Missouri had inserted a provision into a federal spending bill giving federal regulators authority to regulate emissions from small engines to protect a lawn mower manufacturer in his state from California's rules.

But last-minute lobbying by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and other governors along with opposition by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., persuaded lawmakers Saturday night to grant an exemption to the Golden State.

California officials say reducing emissions from small engines on lawn mowers, leaf blowers, forklifts and other garden equipment could equal the pollution emitted by 1.8 million cars by 2020.

But this is a rare victory for California in the nation's capital, where a number of recent decisions have limited the state's ability to reduce smog. Among them are:

i The Bush administration decision last month to relax requirements that require older power plants, refineries and factories to add pollution-control equipment.

i The Bush administration's position last year to support the automakers' lawsuit that challenged California's requirement that 10 percent of cars sold in the state be nonpolluting. A federal judge later ruled that California overstepped its authority and only the federal government could set fuel-efficiency policy.

Also, Congress failed to include stricter fuel efficiency requirements in an energy bill that remains deadlocked over many issues.

"We have done more than any air-pollution agency on Earth to clean up air pollution," said Jerry Martin of the California Air Resources Board. "But they're taking away our tools to do that. And then if we don't meet the [federal air pollution] standards by 2010, they take away our money to improve our freeways."

California must meet federal ozone standards by 2010 or the state risks losing federal highway funds.

The Environmental Protection Agency argues its rules don't prevent California from cleaning its air.

California regulators can adopt new rules governing emissions from power plants and refineries that are stricter than the EPA's, although the agency would have to approve them, said EPA spokesman John Millett.

Ventura County to consider eliminating SUVs from its fleet

The Associated Press

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VENTURA, Calif. (AP) - County officials are expected to vote Tuesday whether they will prohibit government agencies from purchasing or using sport utility vehicles.

If approved, Ventura County could be the first municipality in California to take such action regarding SUVs.

"As far as we know, no one else is doing that," said Erin Maurie, spokeswoman for the League of California Cities. "Maybe others will follow. Who knows?"

Similar legislation was signed last month by then-Gov. Gray Davis. The law, which will take effect in January 2005, requires state agencies requesting an SUV or 4-wheel-drive vehicle to justify a critical need for it.

Police and other emergency services that use the state's 73,000-vehicle fleet are exempt.

Environmentalists have criticized the use of gas-guzzling vehicles because they contribute to air pollution.

Ventura County supervisors last year ordered fleet managers to begin replacing mid-size sedans with hybrid-electrics, which offer better fuel efficiency and reduced emissions.

"Any time you can decrease your energy consumption, you have a positive impact on the environment and a positive impact on your budget," Supervisor Steve Bennett said.

Despite the request, the county has only 26 hybrids in its 1,500-vehicle fleet. Sheriff Bob Brooks is the biggest SUV user in Ventura County, with 36 of the 116 in the fleet assigned to his office.

The proposal does not exempt public safety departments from justifying their need for an SUV. Other departments also would have to show a "substantial need" for an SUV.

Brooks said he would comply with the ordinance if approved, but doubts any change would be made to his department.

"I don't know that there's a problem," he said. "Most agencies have been pretty responsible about the type of vehicles they request."

Carpool to work, receive free gasoline

Lodi News Sentinel

Tuesday, November 25

People who start carpools between now and Dec. 31 can get an additional perk -- up to \$50 per person in free gasoline through the Sacramento Area Council of Governments' carpool incentive program.

The offer is limited to people who live or work in Sacramento, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Placer or El Dorado counties. SACOG's rideshare program seeks to discourage driving alone to decrease traffic congestion, increase mobility and improve air quality in the Sacramento region.

Participants must agree to carpool at least three days a week. The carpoolers must be at least 18 years old and must previously have been driving to work alone. After one month, each member of the carpool can apply for a free gas card worth \$25. After the second month, carpoolers may apply for a second \$25 gas card.

The gas cards are first-come, first-served and supplies are limited. To find carpool matches or register to receive gas cars, call (800) COMMUTE or visit www.sacog.org <<http://www.sacog.org>> <<<http://www.sacog.org>>> and click onto the "regional rideshare program."

[Letter to the Editor, Modesto Bee](#)

Fireplace laws encourage tattling

Tuesday, November 25

Are you sure that when the Soviet Union broke up they didn't take over here? The laws seem to be heading that way. Weren't they encouraged to tattle on one another?

Seriously, this isn't graffiti, this isn't someone breaking into someone's home, this is someone burning a fire in their fireplace. This whole issue is based on junk science and now you are turning people into tattletales. (I would send my children back out to play if they came into tattle on such a trivial issue.)

DEBBRA HUNT

Modesto

