

## **\$500 repair vouchers to be offered at smog event**

The Business Journal Tues., Feb. 23, 2011

Fresno City College is the place to be Feb. 26 if you own an older, "out-of-tune" automobile.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, along with nonprofit advocacy group Valley Clean Air Now, will be hosting an event at the college's "D" lot off of McKinley Avenue from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for motorists to receive a free emissions test.

If a vehicle doesn't pass the smog test, the motorist will receive a \$500 voucher for repairs at a local Gold Shield-certified smog shop. A maximum of 525 cars will be tested on a first-come, first-served basis.

The event will also feature live entertainment and booths hosted by local community organizations. Free food and drinks will be served from 10 a.m. to noon.

More than 2,000 cars have been repaired to state emissions standards through Valley Clean Air Now's "Tune In & Tune Up" program since 2003. About 15 of these events will be held throughout the Valley in the next 18 months.

For more information about the program, visit [www.vrrrm.org](http://www.vrrrm.org). For information about the event, email [eventinfo@valley-can.org](mailto:eventinfo@valley-can.org).

## **Power plant breaks ground**

By Tracy Press staff

Tracy Press, Tuesday, February 22, 2011

he first step toward building a power plant capable of producing enough electricity for 325,000 homes got under way, as officials and dignitaries gathered for a groundbreaking west of Tracy.

The new Tracy Combined Cycle Power Plant will rise from a conversion of the existing GWF Energy peaker plant off West Schulte Road. It should be ready to put out power as early as August 2012.

Power generated at the site is going to be provided to Pacific Gas and Electric Co. under a 10-year purchasing agreement.

Duane Nelson, president and chief operating officer of GWF Energy, pointed out that within a decade, a third of California's energy needs must be provided by renewable "green energy" generated by wind, solar and hydro.

He said GWF saw that the role of the Tracy combined-cycle plant, which will burn natural gas, will be to fill in the gaps caused by the variations in energy-generation levels of the renewable sources.

"The idea of a natural gas plant will be to get out of the way of renewables and to be there to support renewables as needed. If not needed, shut down," Nelson said.

Nelson also noted that near the GWF plant, the city of Tracy has 200 acres where a solar power facility is planned, and that GWF could be a part of that operation to generate up to 25 megawatts of power.

Bob Balgenorth, president of the state Building and Construction Trades Council, stressed that the combined-cycle plant project will provide 400 high-paying jobs during the 18-month construction period.

Once completed in the summer of 2012, the plant will employ 17 full-time workers and another 17 part-time employees.

City, state and congressional officials, including Rep. Jerry McNerney, were on hand to laud the project, which is expected to generate \$1.4 million in local property taxes and \$3.6 million in annual property taxes when finished.

GWF officials also tout the plant will be an improvement in efficiency.

In the past, officials have said the new plant will emit 60 percent less smog and greenhouse gases per megawatt generated than the plant's present incarnation.

But, since the new plant will run closer to full time than the peaker plant, it will produce significantly more pollution overall — according to the California Energy Commission, from about 3,400 pounds of smog a year to up to as much as 180,000 pounds of smog annually and more than 1 million metric tons of greenhouse gases.

## **Cannella introduces bill to ensure California companies get full benefit of air quality regs**

By Sun-Star Staff

In the Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, February 23, 2011

SACRAMENTO — State Sen. Anthony Cannella (R-Ceres) said he introduced Senate Bill 358 to ensure California companies receive the full benefit of state grant funding designed to support efforts to meet and exceed California's rigorous air quality regulations by exempting these grants from the state income tax.

"Companies that are working to comply with our state's environmental regulations ahead of schedule and above the minimum requirements should be rewarded – not penalized – for their efforts to meet and exceed our state's rigorous air quality standards," Cannella said in a news release. "My bill will ensure these businesses receive the full benefit of the state grants available to support their efforts to reduce air pollution by modernizing truck fleets and using cleaner technologies."

California's air quality standards are among the highest in the nation, and companies across the state are working diligently to comply with the strict regulations established by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), according to the news release. Businesses that comply with these regulations ahead of schedule or that exceed the minimum standards are eligible for grant funding from CARB to help cover the high cost of modernizing their truck fleets or purchasing cleaner technology. However, companies must pay state income taxes on these grant funds, diminishing their benefit, according to the news release.

SB 358 provides companies greater incentives to fulfill our state's environmental quality regulations ahead of schedule and to invest in technologies that minimize air pollution by exempting this grant funding from state income taxes, the news release said. In doing so, the bill will help advance California's commitment to reduce air pollution, while also supporting our state's job creators and employers.

"Clean air is integral to supporting a healthy quality of life, and Sen. Cannella's bill will go a long way to help San Joaquin Valley businesses that share our commitment to protecting California's environment for future generations," Pete Weber, chair of the Air Quality Work Group of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, said in a news release. "We are proud to support SB 358 and look forward to working with legislators on both sides of the aisle to pass this measure."

## **Rep. Jerry McNerney opposes Republican budget**

By Ross Farrow

Lodi News Sentinel, Wednesday, February 23, 2011

Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, said he voted against the House Republicans' spending bill for the remainder of the 2010-11 fiscal year because it contains deep cuts to clean energy, education and infrastructure projects.

House Resolution 1 was approved by a 235-189 vote of the House. Galt Rep. Dan Lungren, R-Gold River, voted for the bill. He is unavailable for comment this week, according to Lungren spokesman Brian Kaveney.

"I voted against the House Republicans' spending bill because it will have a devastating impact on many of the people I represent and will do little to tame the deficit," McNerney said in a news release.

The bill will hamper the nation's ability to meet security goals, cost tens of thousands of jobs in the energy sector and make America more dependent on imported oil, McNerney said.

"This bill will kick hundreds of thousands of children out of Head Start programs, cost thousands of teachers their jobs, and make it more difficult for middle class families to send their kids to college," McNerney said. "It also eliminates support for critical transportation projects and will make it tougher to crack down on big corporations that pollute our air and water."

## **APNewsBreak: EPA to ease cost of regulation**

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press

In the Sacramento Bee, Hanford Sentinel, and other papers, Wednesday, February 23, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Faced with stiff opposition in Congress and a court-ordered deadline, the Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday will make it much cheaper for companies to reduce toxic air pollution from industrial boilers and incinerators.

In a vastly overhauled regulation obtained by The Associated Press in advance of its release, the EPA says it has found ways to control pollution at more than 200,000 industrial boilers, heaters and incinerators nationwide at 50 percent less cost to the companies and institutions. That would save businesses \$1.8 billion and still avert thousands of heart attacks and asthma cases a year.

These rules "put in place important public health safeguards...at costs substantially lower than we had estimated under our original proposal," said Gina McCarthy, EPA's top air pollution official, in a news release provided to the AP.

The deep discount for polluting industries will likely send a message to Congress that public health benefits can be achieved more economically, and that the Obama administration is serious about an executive order to review regulations that are onerous for business. The EPA, in its release, says the rules are in line with the review called for by Obama earlier this year.

Republicans and some Democrats have been extremely critical of EPA recently over the costs of a whole host of regulations, including the first-ever rules to control the gases blamed for global warming.

In a letter sent to EPA administrator Lisa Jackson on Monday, six senators expressed concern specifically about the boiler rule, saying that municipalities, universities, and federal facilities could be vulnerable to "excessive and expensive regulatory burdens."

Industrial boilers, which burn coal and other fuels to generate heat and electricity, are used by refineries, chemical plants, hospitals and even churches. They are also the second largest source of toxic mercury emissions in the United States after coal-fired power plants. Mercury is a metal that even at low levels can cause subtle but serious damage to the brain and senses.

Under the new rule, the bulk of industrial boilers at small facilities would not have to meet certain pollution standards. Instead, they would have to do biannual tune ups to reduce emissions. The roughly 13,800 large industrial boilers at refineries, chemical plants and other factories would be subjected to emissions standards requiring them to install technologies to reduce pollution. Facilities already in operation also would not have to comply with the regulation for three years.

Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, February 23, 2011

## Fouling the Clean Air Act

By Dan Becker and James Gerstenzang

Largely hidden in its attack on the federal budget, the House of Representatives has approved a key Republican campaign promise to big business: Protecting it from what the new majority argues are the handcuffs of environmental safeguards. The Republicans would cuff the Environmental Protection Agency instead.

If they prevail in the Senate and overcome a White House veto, they would hobble the Clean Air Act, probably the most successful U.S. law protecting health and the environment, and threaten the authority of California and several other states to use it to fight global warming and other pollution.

The Clean Air Act has meant fewer hospitalizations and missed work days, saving a projected \$2 trillion in 2020 alone by reducing asthma, chronic bronchitis and premature deaths from lung disease. Now, given the go-ahead by the Supreme Court, EPA is using it to cut back on carbon-dioxide pollution, the prime culprit behind our changing climate.

Think of the law as the legal weapon - passed by an overwhelming bipartisan congressional majority, signed by President Richard M. Nixon, approved by the highest court - that has allowed every president beginning with Nixon to fight some of the nation's most difficult health and environmental challenges. Using the law to reduce carbon dioxide will bring us solutions that people like: hybrid and other high-tech gas-sipping cars that cut our gasoline bills more than the improved technology costs.

But some of the nation's biggest polluters have teamed up with the Republicans to try to stop progress - just as more evidence documents global warming: The 10 warmest years on record have all been since 1998; last year was tied with 2005 as the hottest.

Together, they would turn the House into a special-interest court of appeals to circumvent the 2007 Supreme Court ruling that orders EPA to fight global warming. They would limit the clean air law's provisions protecting us from power plant pollution and block several states from adopting tougher pollution controls than the federal government.

California has been a leader in setting air pollution and emissions standards under Clean Air Act provisions. Its efforts to set strong standards have been joined by 13 other states, among them New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Now, automakers are demanding that politicians - not scientists - write the clean car standards intended to reduce carbon-dioxide pollution.

The automakers supported a 5 percent annual reduction in emissions that will get us to 35.5 mpg in 2016 - the biggest step we've taken against global warming. They say they cannot cut emissions 6 percent the next year. These are the same people who said they could not equip cars with seat belts, air bags or catalytic converters.

But, using continuously variable transmissions, low-friction lubricants, improved engines, aerodynamic designs, high-strength light-weight steel and producing the first electric vehicles, they can deliver a fleet that will achieve 62 mpg, cut our emissions by 6 percent per year and help us cut our oil consumption in half by 2030, saving us money at the pump.

Sure, they don't want to. But they can. If you don't believe us, listen to Toyota.

Whatever goal the administration sets, "Toyota will be prepared to meet," the automaker's vice president for product communications, Jim Colon, said. "If it's 62 miles a gallon, we'll be able to achieve that."

Even General Motors, famously late to the innovation starting line, says it will join the race - if ordered. Mark Reuss, the company's top North American executive, said that while he was concerned about meeting a 62 mpg standard, "I think the industry can do anything it wants when

it puts its mind to it. ... We're going to make a plan that's profitable with cars and trucks that people want."

That would be a welcome epiphany for a company that stayed afloat with the help of a \$50 billion bailout from America's taxpayers.

With the planet growing warmer, gas prices climbing and new turmoil in the Middle East threatening our energy security, we can't afford to allow polluters to team up with the new House leadership to deny us progress.

As Mark Twain said, "Denial ain't just a river in Egypt."

#### ABOUT THE WRITERS

Dan Becker is director of the Safe Climate Campaign, which advocates strong action to fight global warming. James Gerstenzang is the campaign's editorial director. They wrote this for McClatchy-Tribune.