

Proposed fireworks ban draws sparks

The Bakersfield Californian

By Steve E. Swenson and Eric Hsu, Californian staff writers

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A proposal to ban the sale and use of fireworks within Bakersfield city limits is sparking the defense of an all-American tradition and concern from nonprofits that sell fireworks to raise money. Bakersfield Fire Chief Ron Frazee suggested the ban in response to a request by City Manager Alan Tandy for advice on revamping the city's fireworks ordinance. The ordinance has been the target of criticism for years for the way permits to run fireworks stands are allocated.

Frazee suggested phasing out fireworks in Bakersfield altogether within two to five years, though he characterized the recommendation as more of an "idea" than a proposal.

But Frazee said that injuries and fires caused by fireworks leave him no choice but to call for the ban. In three years, the number of structure fires in the city due to fireworks increased from four to seven to nine, Frazee said.

Nationwide, 9,000 people were hospitalized in 2002 due to fireworks, half of them by sparklers, fountains, Roman candles and other "safe and sane" fireworks, Frazee said.

He noted that the city has not been on the cutting edge of the issue because 300 cities in California -- about 60 percent of the state's population -- already ban the use and sale of fireworks.

Frazee said he proposed a gradual phasing out of fireworks to give nonprofit groups a chance to pursue "other, safer fund-raising options."

The city issues 67 permits a year to run fireworks stands during five days in July. About 28 permits are issued through a lottery; the rest are held by groups or people "grandfathered" in before the lottery's start in 1995.

The stands can rake in between \$3,500 and \$20,000, and city officials said the permits are primarily intended to be used by nonprofits as fund-raisers. But critics have alleged the system is riddled with corruption and inefficiencies, in which some permits are held for profit by former Bakersfield City Council members and their friends, some groups hold multiple permits, processing fees are too low, and lottery applicants stuff ballot boxes.

Nonetheless, beneficiaries of the permits say the money goes toward good causes and would be hard to replace.

Rod Tidwell, director of Teen Challenge, said the \$15,000 his agency makes each year from fireworks sales pays for about three young people a year to try to turn away from drug abuse.

"It's very important to us to raise money like this," Tidwell said.

John C. Mitchell, a construction inspector for the city and a neighbor of Frazee, said the American Legion Post #26 has used the money to pay expenses during the summer when hall rentals are down.

But he said he understands the safety issues, and it is not surprising that bans are being proposed.

"I always figured the air pollution control district would shut it down," he said.

Neither Tidwell nor Mitchell said they knew how their agencies could replace the money they now make in fireworks sales.

Any change in the city's fireworks ordinance would have to be approved by the Bakersfield City Council. The council was already considering changes to the ordinance that would take effect in 2005.

The proposal appeared to catch members of the Bakersfield City Council by surprise, and reactions were mixed.

Jacquie Sullivan, who represents parts of southwest Bakersfield in Ward 6, said the ban struck her as extreme.

"Fireworks are part of celebrating the Fourth of July," Sullivan said. "Families really enjoy having their fireworks ... (A ban) would be a shame."

But Councilwoman Irma Carson, who represents parts of east and southeast Bakersfield in Ward 1, said she would be inclined to look closely at the measure on Frazee's recommendation.

"He is the chief fire marshal for the city," Carson said. "If he sees (fireworks) as a type of danger to children and families, I think it would be negligent if we didn't look at it."

Several council members said regardless of their views on the ban, a ban would be workable only if undertaken jointly by the city and county.

Kern County Fire Chief Dennis Thompson said he has no plans to make such a proposal, but he would cooperate with the city in exploring such an option.

"We will work in concert with the city to look at the issue," he said.

Thompson noted that the sales and use of fireworks are already banned in fire-dangerous mountain areas, such as Lake Isabella, Tehachapi and Frazier Park.

But sales and use of safe and sane fireworks are permitted on the valley floor and the desert, Thompson said.

Councilwoman Sue Benham, representing Ward 2 in central Bakersfield, said a potential ban was one of just several options the council will consider in its review of the city's fire ordinance.

"My priority is on if our process for granting permits is as fair as it can be," Benham said. "If, at some point in the future, there is a ban is a totally different question."

Balancing exercise and hot weather Physical education takes back seat to heat

By Joe Tone
(Stockton) Record Staff Writer
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When the sun starts smothering the Valley this spring, air-conditioned classrooms will become a favorite destination of students. But there's one class for which students rarely will find themselves in comfy confines: physical education.

For some parents and students, hot weather and poor air quality cause concern when it comes to students joining in on gym class. The concerns are even greater for families in the Valley's many year-round schools, where P.E. class goes on even in the dead of summer heat waves.

Stockton parent Tina Cantrell watches the weather religiously, listening for pollen counts or mold levels. Her son Brandon, a fifth-grader whose Lodi Unified School District school starts Aug. 2, has asthma.

"A lot of the time, if the weather's not good, I ask the teacher to let him sit out," Cantrell said. "She's really nice about it."

Even when he doesn't bring a note, Cantrell's son knows to tell his teacher when he has trouble breathing. There is never a problem, she said.

The state requires students to participate in a certain number of hours of physical ed each year, depending on their grade. However, students with severe medical conditions or serious injuries can sit out of class with the approval from their doctor, said Fay Murdock, a veteran P.E. teacher at Stockton's Sierra Middle School.

Otherwise, she said, regular communication with teachers is the best method for parents concerned about their children's participation in P.E.

"The child's health is what really matters," Murdock said. "We're very sensitive to the needs of the students."

Murdock said she allows students to dampen their shirts and carry bottled water when the temperature rises. When it's dangerously hot, she said, the students stay indoors and trade cardiovascular workouts for more skill-focused exercises.

Often, however, parents overreact to hot weather or dirty air, said Dianne Wilson Graham, a physical-education consultant for the California Department of Education.

Though it may be hot and dry, she said, it may be perfectly safe to play soccer or go for a run. "It may not be at a level that's particularly dangerous," she said. "Physical-education teachers and coaches are trained to know these things."

Parents should trust the judgment of those teachers, she said.

When air quality worsens in July and August, districts often turn to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for guidance.

The district, based in Fresno, designates "spare the air" days, and many Valley school districts keep students indoors on those days, said Janelle Schneider, a public-education representative for air quality district.

When the pollution levels reach particularly dangerous levels, Schneider said, her organization issues health advisories.

But P.E. coaches said that they stay aware of the health risks, and that school districts tell them when running or playing outside may become unsafe.

When there are health concerns, "we just gear down our activity," said Dan Salsbury, P.E. chairman at Bear Creek High School.

And when it's just flat-out hot?

"You live in the Valley," Salsbury said. "You're used to the heat."

Cleaning the Air

For allergy and asthma sufferers, pollution and pollen can be a double-whammy

By Linda Carroll

MSN

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In cities across America, allergies and asthma seem to be worsening. It's not because more plants are pollinating, experts say. Rather, the culprit seems to be the high levels of diesel fumes and ozone polluting the air.

Several recent studies have shown that inhaled diesel particles can not only make allergies worse, but may also help trigger them in susceptible people who have not yet experienced any symptoms.

Other research has shown that pollutants, alone, can set off asthma attacks.

For allergy and asthma sufferers, this means that special attention must be paid not only to pollen counts, but also to the daily pollution index. On high-pollution days, exercise routines may need to be modified. And, for those with severe allergies and asthma, it might make sense to spend more time indoors than out.

The Air That We Breathe

Scientists have wondered for years why cases of allergies and asthma were rising.

"As allergic disease became more prominent, people started thinking about the fact that the increase paralleled the industrial revolution and the increases in air pollution," says Dr. Marc Riedl, a clinical instructor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. "We've done experiments here that showed that if you expose an allergic person to an air pollutant, such as diesel exhaust, and an allergen, then you magnify the response to the allergen by several-fold."

Patients exposed to air pollution as well as pollen, for example, produced more histamines and inflammatory proteins than those exposed only to the allergen, Riedl says. Histamines are chemicals present in cells throughout the body that are released during an allergic reaction. A study published in January found pollution — in particular, diesel exhaust — could significantly worsen symptoms in allergy sufferers. The study, which appeared in *The Lancet*, showed that when patients were exposed to diesel exhaust in addition to an allergen, histamine production increased by fivefold.

And these effects were magnified in people with a particular genetic makeup. People with a mutation to the gene responsible for making an enzyme known as glutathione S-transferase M1 (GSTM1) responded even more strongly to the combination of diesel exhaust and allergen, the researchers found.

As many as 50 percent of people are born with this mutation, says the study's lead author, Dr. Frank Gilliland, a professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California.

The Asthma Connection

Recent research has also implicated pollution in asthma development and exacerbation. For example, a study published in January in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* found that children who spent their first three years near a busy highway were more likely to develop asthma than those who lived near quieter streets.

And a report published in November 2003 in the *Journal of Allergy & Clinical Immunology* showed that diesel exhaust could trigger an asthma-like episode in mice.

What does this mean for allergy and asthma sufferers?

You need to watch both the pollution levels as well as the pollen levels, experts say.

"This is a big issue for us in Los Angeles — we don't have the greatest air quality," Riedl says. "I tell my patients to watch the news for the air quality report. And if the air quality is poor or even moderate, they need to be aware of that."

And on those really bad days, it may make sense to minimize exposure to dirty air.

"For people with asthma or serious allergic problems, it's best to stay inside if they can," Riedl says. "And if you have to be outside, avoid strenuous exercise."

If you do need to go outside, you might want to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth, says Dr. Marjorie Slankard, an associate professor of medicine at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York.

The Ins and Outs

People with severe allergies or asthma may want to ask their doctors about increasing the dosage of their medications on bad air days, Riedl says.

And when it comes to exercise — do it, but indoors, Slankard says.

Smog can impact even the best-conditioned athletes, experts say.

"I've seen a couple of high-level athletes who've had real trouble with their exercise regimens since they've moved here to Los Angeles," Riedl says. "The only thing that's changed is their location."

Even on low-pollution days, people with allergies and/or asthma need to stay away from busy roads, Slankard says. If you're allergic to tree pollen and want to work out in a park to get away from cars, then try to exercise in the afternoon. That's because trees pollinate in the morning.

More older cars may need smog check

Bill won't hurt most enthusiasts of classic autos

By Will Shuck, Capitol Bureau Chief

Los Angeles Times

Published Sunday, April 25, 2004

SACRAMENTO -- Whether you see them as classics or junkers, California law says a 30-year-old car doesn't need to pass a smog test.

But now comes a bill that would forever freeze 1975 as the latest-model car to enjoy the loophole. Auto buffs hate the bill. Environmentalists love it.

The author, Democratic Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, says most motorheads getting all revved up would never be affected by the bill, so they might as well put the brakes on their complaints.

Your '57 Chevys, '65 Mustangs, '34 Duesenbergs, Packards, Edsels and all other cars and trucks manufactured before the nation's bicentennial never need darken the door of a neighborhood smog-check station under Lieber's bill.

"No cars before 1976 would have to be smog-checked," said Lieber, a freshman Assembly member from Mountain View. "We've had lots of letters and calls from people who don't like it, but almost all of them would not be affected."

Even talk-show host Jay Leno, an avid car and motorcycle collector, reportedly has no cars in his collection newer than a 1972 model.

"You've got to draw the line somewhere," Lieber said.

Sure, a 1976 cutoff probably won't affect many in the classic-car-show crowd.

But for the lovers of old 4x4 Broncos at Wild Horses Inc. in Stockton, Lieber's bill leaves out two years of the old, stubby workhorses loved by off-roaders.

Wild Horses specializes in products specifically for Broncos, and specifically those made from 1966 to 1977.

Owner Jim Creel wrote a letter to the Assembly Transportation Committee, urging members to stop Lieber's bill.

"Could it be that regulators, feeling the heat from a failed effort to meet air-quality goals, have found a convenient scapegoat?" he asked.

Johnny Rose, the sales manager at Wild Horses, said most of his customers believe the '76 and '77 Broncos are just as classic as the older ones.

"They're getting rarer and rarer to find," he said. "People really want them. They're really good for wheeling because the wheelbase is shorter, so they climb rocks easier."

Lieber says she understands that classic is in the eye of the beholder. But since smog is in the lungs of everyone, she's determined to stop the continual slide of smog-exempt cars.

"A 1977 car that's been lovingly restored to original condition, that's not impossible," she said.

"There are even folks out there, funny as it seems, that have a perfectly restored Ford Pinto from that era or a Gremlin or whatever. But those folks are very few in number."

Few is a relative term, of course. A quick search of the Internet turns up multiple sites and clubs dedicated to the humble Pinto.

But car lovers aren't the only ones with a dog in this fight. Environmentalists, too, have been churning out letters. Theirs, of course, urge lawmakers to pass the bill.

The American Lung Association, for example, reminds legislators there are 63,984 cars and trucks built in 1976 that would be exempt from clean-air rules in a couple of years if Lieber's bill fails.

And the Planning and Conservation League, a sponsor of the bill, hoped to undercut any arguments about picking on poor people who have to drive old junkers. The state Bureau of Automotive Repairs will help low-income people pay for emission repairs, covering all but \$20 of the \$500 limit on such work.

The so-called "rolling exemption" was born in 1997, with the passage of Senate Bill 42. Until then, the only vehicles exempted from smog testing were vehicles made in 1965 or earlier. But SB42 extended the exemption to 1974 and older vehicles, and changed the law so that every year after 2003, the exemption would rise by one year -- rolling along with the advancing calendar.

Lieber says it's time to stop all that rolling and start cleaning the air.

"We're really at a crisis point," she said. "The vast majority of Californians are living with dirty air, and we're having an epidemic of asthma. And, really, I'm feeling like getting a smog check is not that big a sacrifice."

EPA rule changes air game

Strict standards, longer deadline may drag cleanup

By Nicholas Grudin, Staff Writer

Los Angeles Times

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SANTA CLARITA -- A strict new federal ozone standard meant to substantially reduce air pollution by 2021 could help Santa Clarita's air pollution troubles in the long run, but local regulators say the distant deadline will promote procrastination.

The new standard -- announced last week by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- will change the way regulators measure air pollution, shifting from a one-hour sampling duration to a more representative eight-hour standard.

EPA officials say the more stringent standard, and the lengthened timeline, will force more complete emissions reforms necessary in Southern California while also allowing a realistic time frame.

"The same steps that need to be taken to attain the eight-hour standard should get us to the one-hour standard. It would be completely illogical for the agencies or the businesses to slow down in the fight to reduce emissions," said Matt Haber, the EPA's deputy director for the Pacific Southwest air division.

However, officials for the South Coast Air Quality Management District were hoping to make a dent in the region's most severe ozone problems by working toward a less stringent deadline in 2010. Those plans were dashed last week with the EPA's announcement, which delays a legal deadline by 11 years.

"Extending that deadline another 11 years, are you going to lose momentum?" said AQMD spokesman Sam Atwood. "Industry groups, the state of California, and even EPA itself could see this new deadline as taking away the urgency of cleaning up our air."

These issues are particularly important to the Santa Clarita Valley, not because the regulations will necessarily impact residents and businesses here, but rather because the pollution generated throughout the Los Angeles Basin settles here, according to air pollution experts.

From 2001 to 2003, Santa Clarita recorded the third highest average ozone readings in the nation, at 126 parts per billion, according to the EPA.

The current standard is 80 ppb.

Santa Clarita also ranked in the national Top 10 for the number of days exceeding the standard, averaging nearly 50 days a year for the past three years.

In other words, health officials say, the Santa Clarita Valley is not a healthy place to exercise outdoors for about 15 percent of the year.

It is these reasons that have Atwood frustrated by what he considers a delay by the EPA.

"The deadlines do tend to focus your attention. It's a good thing for public health, and the 16 million people in Southern California want to make sure that the heat is kept on the industry to continue to clean up our air in the pace that we've seen for the last couple of decades," Atwood said. "Our concern is to see whether (the new EPA standard) is stringent enough to require a rate of progress equal to what we were achieving."

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[Los Angeles Times editorial, April 25, 2004:](#)

Cleanup for Clean Air Plan

Most environmentalists would rather immolate a tree than acknowledge that a new Bush administration regulation could benefit the Earth. Even they, however, have had to credit Environmental Protection Agency chief Michael O. Leavitt's April 15 promise to impose stricter federal standards on smog-causing ozone. Too bad Leavitt attached a couple of stinkers to the new standards by letting noncompliant counties largely ignore them with little chance of penalty. If it hopes to clean up the air, Congress will need to clean up those provisions.

The old standards, enforced since 1979, deemed air unhealthy when a one-hour sampling detected 120 parts per billion of ozone, a warm-weather gas that can corrode lungs and trigger asthma attacks. Leavitt's new rules deem air unhealthy if regulators pinpoint an average of above 85 parts per billion over an eight-hour period. As Don Hunsaker, a supervisor for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, put it, "The new standard is tougher because it is always harder to move an average down than a single peak reading."

Congress, however, shouldn't rubber-stamp Leavitt's plan.

The 1977 Clean Air Act gave the EPA the ability to strip federal highway funds from counties that failed to meet standards. Leavitt, however, wants to grant these counties two five-year extensions and then a third extension of two years. Counties would be penalized not for failing to clean their air but rather for failing to come up with a plan that purports to meet standards in the future.

In other words, instead of actually making the air cleaner, counties instead could spin theoretical models for how they planned to do it. If the models fell short, the ones who suffered for it would be the elderly, the ill, the children, everyone except the officials who failed to get the job done.

Pundits at the Environmental Working Group, a liberal lobbying organization, call this the ecological version of social promotion: "As long as you turn in a term paper, even if it's a lame effort, you get to continue."

Environmentalists have reason to suspect this toothless federal plan. Consider, for example, how the administration trumpeted its "Clear Skies" initiative, now stalled in Congress, as a pollution cut when it would suck far less muck out of the sky than the Clean Air Act it would supplant. Or how it promised that another set of changes would reduce pollution when the change in fact would let old, dirty coal plants evade virtually all responsibility for increased pollution when they increased capacity.

Unless Congress presses Leavitt to put teeth in his rules, the value of his new ozone standards will be lost and a promising environmental move will become just another ploy to let polluters escape regulation.

[Fresno Bee commentary, April 24, 2004:](#)

Fresno's air quality demands attention from politicians

By Ruth Rosborough-Larocca

(Updated Saturday, April 24, 2004, 6:59 AM)

Dear Fresno:

It's been more than two years since Al and I left you for San Juan; we've missed you something fierce.

When we had a chance to attend your WIN/WIN Saroyan Writers' Conference this March, we grabbed the opportunity to feel the atmosphere and breathe the air -- you should excuse the expression. The conference is an experience that should not be missed.

We flew on that airline where you buy lunch. Cruising above the gentle orchards, landing and then out of the plane into a soothing early spring day, (temps in the low '80s) oh, it felt good.

Into the sunshine, but, "Al, is my sight failing, or is that sky grayish, mottled? There are only hints of blue ..." "Ruthie, remember the smog? This air is so thick you could spread it on toast!"

Oh, my. I'd forgotten.

Grand old Fresno, how about that? You live in Puerto Rico or Ohio where the skies are high and clear; you get off a plane in Fresno, look up and, oh, my goodness!

And a fact of an expanding, if not exactly booming Fresno? Now 16% of your children are asthmatic.

We couldn't visit close friends because the lady was in and out of emergency rooms all week. Asthma. One of Al's former associates is having a hideous time with asthma. A couple of other friends sounded really raspy.

As I write you, the Environmental Protection Agency just put the capper on Valley air. Golly, big surprise. Fresno's not meeting EPA standards; the threatened sanctions are menacing and very expensive.

Adopted home

Fresno, you're our adopted hometown, for better or worse. So, after recovering from initial sky-shock, we met with friends, cruised the city and breathed in your true fragrance -- the sweetness of a Fresno spring, which differs from the stench of crop spraying and dusting that when chemical fertilizers and insecticides were new, seemed to blow off, blow away.

Not today.

Let's get back to your air.

You can't solve air pollution by yourself. You know that. If there was full cooperation between you and local towns, and then maybe with everybody between Stockton and Bakersfield, there's an off-chance you could do some good. But no more than an off-chance unless you all agreed to pass laws limiting residents to one car per family. Fat chance.

What's rolling up and down I-5 and Highway 99, plus airborne agricultural contributions and the offerings of a few nonconforming industries -- that's what's doing it. And that's not your responsibility, Fresno; very little of this junk originates within metropolitan borders.

Your local representatives -- your pols -- should be doing more than "thinking" about it. Thinking? Speechifying! Raising the roof! Fresno's children are threatened, endangered by exhaust fumes, by breathing in "particles" from our farms (unless the whole kit and caboodle goes organic or some such). Legitimate industry is scared.

And the greater Fresno ecology? Invisible ozone, creeping up into the foothills, endangering everything green? Yes, but consider what's happening to trees, landscaping, gardens, veggies growing on the Valley floor, what with all that junk weighing down. Oppressing.

However, there's a new attitude. We heard folks talking about class actions, lawsuits directed toward those responsible for regional inaction, about political challenges to silent Valley legislators (so-called) whose voices have atrophied through disuse.

I heard EPA administrator Mike Leavitt's recent speech. He's a nice guy who seems incapable of taking up the question of who's going to pay for clean air. Does EPA funding extend only to carping and complaining? Federal highways are major contributors to the ruination of your fertile plains. What are the feds actually doing for the health of your coughing, choking children? Your elders?

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (for whom we would have voted) must know the Valley's fetid air is a California problem. Sacramento must stop speaking of this as something "local."

The governor must confront Leavitt instead of letting the EPA sit in judgment 3,000 miles from the problem.

It's going to be grand, Fresno, watching you and Mayor Alan Autry quietly taking command of the situation by refusing to be the victims of state and federal arrogance.

Our best to you, with love ...

[Fresno Bee commentary, April 24, 2004:](#)

Come out Sunday and celebrate Earth Day

By George B. Kauffman

(Updated Saturday, April 24, 2004, 7:00 AM)

The first Earth Day (April 22, 1970) focused public attention on pollution and environmental concerns and made the esoteric term "ecology" a household word. This year, many organizations celebrated Earth Day, which officially fell on Thursday, with outreach programs. The American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific organization, is showcasing the anniversary with a program highlighting the positive contributions that chemistry makes to our environment and reminding us that all our actions and choices impact the health of our planet.

Chemistry contributes to a sustainable Earth by recognizing and quantifying environmental pollution and by developing environmentally friendly products and processes such as recyclable plastics, cleaner-burning fuels, phosphate-free detergents and environmental monitoring. A special field -- green chemistry -- develops environmentally benign chemical products and processes in the context of renewable resources.

Because this year is the United Nations International Year of Freshwater, the chemical society selected "What do you know about water?" as its theme for its 2004 celebration. Together with

the Earth Day Network, it encourages its local sections to participate in the unifying event of testing local rain water and additional hands-on activities.

Every year, chemists at the National Atmospheric Deposition Program test more than 10,000 samples of rain or snow to monitor air or water pollution. Students, families, and community groups who wish to find out if our local rain water is acidic can test its pH and report their results to the NADP by following the links provided at www.earthday.net or chemistry.org/earthday, which also include instructions, educator's guides, lesson plans and information on related activities.

Fresno Earth Day is an annual community-sponsored event promoting environmental awareness and education, local arts and music and providing opportunities for environmental and social justice organizations to communicate with a wide audience in the San Joaquin Valley. It will be held Sunday in Roeding Park from noon until sundown. Considering the urgent necessity to improve the Valley's air quality, as advocated in The Bee's "Last Gasp" articles, this year's event should be particularly timely. In sharp contrast to the positive contributions of scientists toward reducing pollution, the Bush administration has merely spun a web of pro-environment rhetoric. Yet, it has rolled back three decades of bipartisan environmental protections in its efforts to benefit clients in the oil, gas, coal and other industries at the expense of a clean, healthy and safe environment.

On a wide range of issues like global warming, childhood lead poisoning, mercury emissions, climate change, reproductive health, nuclear weapons, energy policy and arctic drilling, it distorts and censors scientific findings that contradict its policies. It manipulates data to align results with predetermined political decisions, undermines the independence of scientific advisory panels by nominating under-qualified persons or those with industry affiliations, and even disbands scientific advisory committees completely.

Scientific integrity

On Feb. 18, the Union of Concerned Scientists, an independent nonprofit alliance of more than 100,000 citizens and scientists interested in environmental issues, released a statement signed by 62 of our nation's leading and most respected scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates and 19 recipients of the National Medal of Science, condemning the administration's consistent pattern of abusing science. The UCS simultaneously issued a report investigating the lack of integrity of science in federal policy-making and launched an online information center

(www.ucsususa.org/global_environment/rsi/index.cfm) helping citizens participate in its campaign for legislative and regulatory action to restore scientific integrity to federal policy-making.

According to F. Sherwood Rowland of the University of California, Irvine, who won the Nobel Prize for warning that now-banned chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) released into the atmosphere were depleting the Earth's ozone layer, "The public deserves rational decision-making based on the best scientific advice based on what is likely to happen, not what political entities might wish to happen."

Kurt Gottfried, professor emeritus of physics at Cornell University and chairman of the UCS board, stated, "The Bush administration has engaged in practices that are in conflict with the spirit of science and the scientific method, leading to growing and widespread concern in the scientific community."

If Earth Day observances raise our consciousness of our obligations to the planet, result in a balanced view of our responsibilities to the fragile ecosystem and make us aware of the abuses and lack of credibility of the current administration, they cannot but help to have a positive effect.