

## **Talent**

Modesto Bee, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

SEEKING STUDENT ARTISTS Through Sept. 30

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is looking for student artwork for its 2007 Clean Air Kids Calendar. 557-6400.

## **Hybrid bill debated as it awaits action**

by Kiley Russell

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

More hybrid electric vehicles will be allowed in the state's car pool lanes under a bill waiting for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signature.

The bill by Assemblyman Ted Lieu, D-Torrance, would increase the number of carpool permits to 85,000 from 75,000 for the eco-friendly vehicles. It would allow hybrid drivers to use the lanes even when they are driving alone.

The governor's office declined to comment on the bill, but Lieu expects an endorsement because Schwarzenegger asked him to carry it, said Lieu spokesman David Ford.

The legislation also would allow hybrid drivers to use the lanes until 2011. Current law forces hybrids back into regular traffic lanes in 2008.

The bill is opposed by some environmentalists and is contrary to a Caltrans report that suggests the HOV lane perk should not be expanded. High gas prices are already encouraging car pools, the report found.

Meanwhile, the state's auto dealers aren't convinced that the car pool program is boosting sales of hybrid vehicles, said Marcella Rojas, spokeswoman for the California Motor Car Dealers Association.

"We haven't seen a bigger impact because of the program," Rojas said. "With gas at \$3 a gallon, hybrids are kind of ruling the roads."

But Lieu believes that the incentive created by the current hybrid/car pool program and his proposed expansion will lead to more hybrids on the road and less air pollution and will help ease the state's oil and gasoline dependency, Ford said.

"We do know there's been a huge upswing in the sale of hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles," Ford said. "According to the DMV, more than 113,000 hybrid vehicles registered last month, up from 57,136 in July of 2005."

"Obviously the car pool lanes are not the only reasons why people buy hybrids, but we hope it's one more incentive for people to look at those vehicles," he said.

Not all hybrids are eligible for the car pool program, however. Eligible vehicles must get at least 45 miles per gallon; Presently, that limits the car pool program to the Toyota Prius, the Honda Insight and the Honda Civic Hybrid.

And while there's no evidence that the program is significantly boosting hybrid sales, consumers are excited by it, said Jim Totah, general sales manager at Toyota of Walnut Creek,

"One person in particular has told me that just the fact that he can use the car pool lane has helped his marriage," Totah said.

"He gets home earlier, he's not as grumpy and I guess he get to see kids before they're in bed."

The Caltrans report, required under a 2004 law that created the current program, documented mixed results for the hybrid car pool program.

Between April 2005 and April 2006, traffic congestion increased to "unacceptable" levels on 3 percent to 5 percent of the car pool lanes monitored by Caltrans. However, during that same period, traffic flow improved on 3 percent to 4 percent of lanes statewide.

"On any given day, it appears that approximately 10 percent of (car pool) lane-miles will operate under degraded conditions with or without hybrids," according to the report.

Still, as the popularity of hybrids and car pooling rises with gas prices, any program that allows single-occupancy vehicles to use the state's car pool lanes is redundant and could seriously irritate commuters, said Stuart Cohen, executive director of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition.

"The problem is many of our (car pool) lanes are already slowing down to the same speed as the regular lanes," Cohen said. "And at that point we're deterring people from trying to get out of their cars and form a car pool and get on buses and we may be encouraging people to switch back and drive alone."

## **Pollution Bill Aimed at California**

By ERICA WERNER, The Associated Press

In the Washington Post, LA Daily News, NY Times, Fresno Bee, SF Chronicle and other papers

Thursday, Sept. 7, 2006, and Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

WASHINGTON -- A bill to crank up penalties for the nation's most polluted air regions -- both in California -- was introduced Thursday in the Senate by Congress' biggest skeptic of global warming.

A week after reacting angrily to California's passage of landmark anti-global warming legislation, Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., produced a bill to more than double fines on polluters who don't meet cleanup deadlines for soot and smog. States that don't submit cleanup plans could be denied federal highway funds.

Democrats and environmental activists accused Inhofe, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, of retaliating against California. Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's office said the bill "unfairly targets" the state.

Inhofe has said that manmade global warming could be "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." He called the bill the California Legislature passed last week to reduce greenhouse gases "feel-good legislation to appease liberal special interest groups."

A spokesman for Inhofe said his bill was already in the works before California lawmakers passed theirs.

"While this bill is not a response, it does expose the hypocrisy of their climate initiative," said Inhofe spokesman Matt Dempsey. "This bill will clean up real air pollution; it will save thousands of lives and result in tens of billions of dollars saved, unlike the California global warming bill."

California isn't mentioned in Inhofe's bill, but it applies to areas that don't meet strict attainment standards for ozone and particulate matter. The only two areas of the country that meet that description are the Los Angeles basin and the San Joaquin Valley.

The bill drew an angry response from Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who is in line to become the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee next year. "I can only conclude that this legislation is punishment for my state's groundbreaking, bipartisan global warming bill," she said.

Frank O'Donnell, director of Clean Air Watch, called Inhofe's move "a political stunt by the Senate's biggest champion of big polluters."

The California global warming plan, a deal between Schwarzenegger and legislative Democrats, would make California the first state to impose a limit on and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"I have no doubt that members of the Senate will see today's action for what it is and support our efforts to lead the way in combating global warming," Schwarzenegger said in a statement.

## **New Power Plants May Get Leeway on Smog**

**Electric utilities would be allowed to buy pollution credits from hospitals, sewage facilities and fire stations under an AQMD plan set for a hearing today.**

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

The South Coast Air Quality Management District is expected to vote today on a plan that would allow major new power plants across Southern California to buy air pollution credits designed for hospitals, fire stations, sewage plants and other essential service providers.

The AQMD staff predicts that under the program, an additional three tons of smog-forming pollutants could be emitted each day by plants proposed in Industry, Carson, Vernon, Victorville, Palmdale and Romoland, an Inland Empire community.

BP, Edison Mission Energy, the city of Vernon and other plant applicants would pay a per-pound fee for the extra smog they would be allowed to emit. Those prices would be set high -- \$54,000 per pound for particulate soot, for instance -- but would be less than the \$90,000 per pound currently charged under an open-market system. The fee also would need to be paid only once as opposed to annually on the open market.

Funds from the program would be used for other pollution-reduction plans, such as replacing older, diesel-powered school buses with cleaner ones, they said, and any increase in pollution would be gradually offset.

Environmental and community justice groups sharply criticized the proposal, saying that there would be a net gain in air pollution across the Southland, and that poorer communities where the plants would be built would be hit hardest in a region already badly out of compliance with federal clean air laws. They said renewable energy and conservation should be used instead.

"It's a handout to the power plant companies by air regulators that are supposed to be protecting air quality, but what they're really doing is engaging in corporate welfare.... It means that we're going to have more air pollution, not less, and that we're even further away from reaching the federal air quality standards," said Joe Lyou of California Environmental Rights Alliance, a Los Angeles-based group that is one of several objecting to the plan.

The cities where the plants are proposed, Lyou said, "are communities of color and low-income communities that are already overwhelmed with all kinds of pollution."

But executives with the AQMD and power plant proponents say the exemptions, which were granted once before after the 2001 energy crisis, are necessary because new, cleaner electricity is badly needed to prevent more blackouts. They say there are almost no emissions credits available in a similar open-market program designed for commercial companies in the Southland.

"Without this program ... these new, clean technology plants will not get built," said AQMD Executive Director Barry Wallerstein.

The AQMD staff pointed to forecasts by California's Independent System Operator predicting the entire state would need 3,248 additional megawatts by 2010 to avoid severe Stage 3 blackouts. The new projects proposed for Southern California would generate just under 3,500 megawatts. Wallerstein said he feared that if the new plants were not built, it could lead to efforts to scrap the emissions-offset program completely and permanently weaken clean air laws.

He said the reserve program for essential service providers was the only legal avenue to create more credits for commercial plants.

Far from cutting into the emission credit supply needed for new hospitals, fire stations and other essential services, Wallerstein added, it would guarantee that public health and safety needs could be met while clean air standards were upheld.

"When people are out of electricity, there is a host of public safety problems that occur. So if the choice is between people having no traffic lights and having traffic accidents, or a patient not having access to oxygen because he needs electricity for it, in the past the governor and other elected officials have said you have to have more air pollution," Wallerstein said. "So from our perspective, it's better to make sure you have enough clean power and electricity to provide the necessities."

Bob Wyman, an attorney with Latham & Watkins who along with another partner is representing some of the power plant applicants, said, "These plants being proposed are the cleanest plants in the world.... I think the opponents are misguided."

He said the construction of new, cleaner power plants would also reduce the use of older, less-efficient and dirtier power plants during non-peak hours.

If the regulatory change is passed, it would apply to proposed projects between 2005 and 2008 and would also need to be approved by the California Air Resources Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA approval could be done retroactively, Wyman said.

A public hearing will be held before the vote. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. at AQMD headquarters at 21865 Copley Drive in Diamond Bar.

## **Without bridge life rolls on, turns out**

### **Closure due to construction did not impede Bay Area travelers**

by Erik N. Nelson

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

It was the disaster that wasn't: Caltrans' demolition crews had to rip up the entrance to the Bay Bridge in San Francisco, a project that by some calculations should have taken two or more weekends, creating gridlock in a city that can't live without this biggest of transbay arteries.

But do without they did.

Over the weekend, more people rode BART — 13 percent above normal ridership — than took advantage of free rides during this summer's anti-smog Spare the Air Days.

Others took ferries. Others chose to exit the city across other bridges, clogging those arteries at times, but getting there nonetheless.

Perhaps the largest group that heeded Caltrans' advertising and media closure warning blitz were those who simply didn't venture across the bay at all.

However it happened, getting past this major hurdle on the \$429 million project to replace aging concrete viaducts that feed traffic on and off the bridge's western end became a cause for elation among managers at Caltrans, the state's transportation agency.

"There is an incredible high, if you will, kind of like when you win the NBA Championship," said Ken Terpstra, project manager for the entire Bay Bridge retrofit project.

Now there shouldn't be any major interruptions in Bay Bridge traffic for several years, after the connections to the new eastern span begin to take shape.

It could have turned out much differently. Initial reactions to closing the lower, or eastbound, deck of the Bay Bridge throughout the three-day Labor Day weekend was, as expected, "What are they thinking?" One Caltrans manager said that even his wife asked that question.

But the answer, disseminated on the airwaves, in newspapers and on ubiquitous four-color Caltrans fliers, was that the three-day weekend was just enough time to finish the demolition of more than 1,000 feet of upper deck and supporting columns and any other weekend would have run afoul of major events.

People heard this, digested it, and, apparently understood.

On Saturday afternoon, traffic in the area around the bridge made it seem more like Sacramento than San Francisco as 21 pneumatic hammers mounted on hydraulic arms knocked down 50,000 tons of concrete, chunk by chunk.

By Tuesday morning, clean-up crews shoveled, scooped and swept the mess away until shortly after 4 a.m., less than an hour until the scheduled bridge re-opening.

While most of the 400 workers on the bridge and its appendages were tearing down the West Approach, others were involved with 11 other projects along five miles of the bridge, ranging from resurfacing to installing a culvert to changing light bulbs over the middle of the lower deck.

Terpstra said the project's success was the result of a massive effort by the contractor, Tutor-Saliba, the demolition subcontractor, Cleveland Wrecking, a host of transit agencies such as BART, AC Transit, and the Oakland-Alameda Ferry and even the media for getting the word out.

## **Christian Group Encourages Recycling**

By the Associated Press  
N.Y Times, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

Tending to your soul at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Boise, Idaho, involves recycling old cell phones and printer cartridges in the church lobby, pulling noxious weeds in the backcountry and fixing worn-out hiking trails in the mountains. This is part of the ministry of Tri Robinson, a former biology teacher whose rereading of the Bible led him to the belief that Christians focused on Scripture need to combat global warming

"All of a sudden Boise Vineyard is one of the most important driving forces in our community for the environment," Robinson said. "People say, 'Why are you doing that?' Because God wants it."

Many evangelicals have dismissed environmentalists as liberals unconcerned about the economic impact of their policies to fight global warming. Long-standing distrust between the two camps over issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage has discouraged evangelicals from joining liberals on the environment.

But shared concerns over global warming and protecting the Earth are bringing together the two groups in ways that could make the Republican Party more eco-friendly and lead some evangelicals to vote Democratic.

In signs of change, Robinson had a Sierra Club representative at his environmental conference recently, and the Sierra Club invited Calvin DeWitt, a University of Wisconsin biology professor and a founder of the Evangelical Environmental Network, to its summit last year where it declared global warming the top issue for the coming decade.

"More and more evangelicals are coming to believe creation care is an integral part of their calling as Christians. It is becoming part of their faith," said Melanie Griffin, director of partnerships for the Sierra Club and an evangelical.

Dewitt said evangelicals will not call themselves environmentalists.

"They are going to call themselves pro-life," he said. "But pro-life means life in the Arctic, the life of the atmosphere, the life of all the people under the influence of climate change."

The last time the environment was a major political issue was the 1970s, when rivers were catching fire, acid rain was killing lakes and Earth Day was created. President Nixon, a Republican, signed landmark legislation to combat air and water pollution, protect endangered species and create the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since then, League of Conservation Voters scorecards show Democrats getting greener and Republicans browner. President Bush earned the organization's first "F" for a president.

Hoping to sway Bush, 86 evangelical pastors, college presidents and theologians signed a letter in February calling on Christians and the government to combat global warming.

One of the signers was Bert Waggoner, national director of The Vineyard USA, a network of more than 600 churches with 200,000 members.

"If you believe, as I do, that the ultimate end is not the destruction of the Earth but the healing of the Earth, you will be inclined toward wanting to work with God to see it restored," he said.

Much of the old guard remains unmoved.

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the country, adopted a resolution in June denouncing environmental activism and warning that it was "threatening to become a wedge issue to divide the evangelical community."

Focus on the Family leader James Dobson admonished evangelicals to remain focused on stopping abortion and gay marriage.

The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, which includes Christian leaders with close ties to the Bush administration, argues that if humans are responsible for global warming, the costs of preventing it outweigh the harm it causes, said spokesman Calvin Beisner.

"This is not a split," DeWitt said. "It is a transformation. What you find in the evangelical world in contrast to mainline denominations is that they are very suspect of authority."

A Pew Research Center for the People survey this year found that 66 percent of white evangelicals said there was solid evidence the Earth was getting warmer, with 32 percent blaming human activity, 22 percent natural patterns and the rest undecided.

John Green, professor of political science at the University of Akron and a senior fellow of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, sees evangelicals, particularly the young and educated, increasingly interested in issues that could take some of them out of the Republican Party.

"Climate change is not only a part of this but perhaps the most public part," Green said.

Robinson said he voted for Bush in 2004 because of his opposition to abortion, but it was a tough decision, making him feel he was voting against the environment.

"If the conservatives want the Christian vote, they are going to have to address this," he said.

The pastor feels like Noah cutting his first tree to build the Ark.

"God blesses small beginnings," he said. "That's why we're trying to get people to recycle -- do the little things. I believe God will meet us."

[L.A. Times editorial, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2006:](#)

## **Clean Up the Killer Ports**

**Governor should embrace environmentalism over placating businesses by approving a new fee on shipping containers.**

AMONG THE MANY BILLS passed by the Legislature in the frantic final days of August was one little-heralded measure that could go a long way toward curbing two of Southern California's worst ills: traffic and smog. For it to become law, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's environmental consciousness will have to triumph over his impulse to placate business interests.

SB 927 by state Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) would impose a fee of \$30 per 20-foot container on all cargo ships passing through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. It is projected to generate \$500 million a year, which would be earmarked for improving port security, cleaning up port pollution and building port infrastructure.

Port issues seldom generate much excitement among voters, but they should. The ports are the single largest generator of air pollution in Southern California, which kills an estimated 2,400 people prematurely per year. They're also a major source of traffic.

Shippers and retailers, who would be stuck with the tab under Lowenthal's plan, contend that the legislation would encourage shippers to send their goods elsewhere, that it would constitute a tax (which would require two-thirds approval in the Legislature), that it would violate the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution and that it would hurt consumers by raising prices on many products.

These claims are exaggerated or wrong on all counts. A study commissioned by two environmental groups found that the proposed fee would increase total voyage costs to local ports by 1.5% to 2.5%. But sending goods through the Panama Canal to ports on the East Coast or in the Gulf of Mexico would add far more expense, and the only major West Coast alternatives - Oakland, Seattle and Portland - can handle just a fraction of the local ports' traffic. The bill clearly creates a user fee, not a tax, and the commerce clause does not prevent states from imposing such fees. And if the bill would add a few cents to the price of some consumer products, it would be worth it.

Under the bill, the ports would use a third of the proceeds to pay for better security, and the state Air Resources Board and Transportation Commission would control the rest. There are plenty of projects to go around. The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp., a nonprofit business organization, has identified \$4 billion worth of needed infrastructure projects, and a plan by the ports to cut air pollution would require billions more. Much of the money is likely to come from taxpayers; voters will be asked in November to approve \$3.2 billion worth of bonds to cover port infrastructure and air quality. It's only fair that the shipping industry contribute as well.

Schwarzenegger has not said whether he will sign SB 927. Few other bills will test his commitment to the environment more. If he's truly interested in burnishing his environmental credentials before the November election, he'll sign this bill into law.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006:](#)

### **Price: Developers need to let the city develop**

by ROBERT PRICE, Californian staff writer

Can you hear it? The howling? Yes, it's developers -- again.

Bakersfield is growing. That, they like. But Bakersfield is also growing up, and developers don't like that quite as much.

This time, specifically, they don't like county government's "this just in" conclusion that it's probably not a good idea to allow developers to build vast new subdivisions equipped with septic tanks. County planners have decreed that developers must hook up new housing tracts to the municipal sewer system.

The way developers are carrying on, you'd think the county had outlawed SUVs.

Planners are merely, some might add finally, trying to make sure we can stretch services (sewer, roads, fire and police protection) to the peripheries of our ever-expanding burg.

Planning? In Kern County? Who'd-a-thunk it?

Look at the numbers: Among 11 Central Valley counties, according to the American Farmland Trust, [Kern leads the way in vehicle miles traveled per household](#), a reflection of our farmland-eating need for excessive elbow room. We're next-to-last in people per urban acre, a measurement of development efficiency, and fourth worst in percentage of urbanized land outside cities' spheres of influence.

In case that's too much jargon for you, replace the above paragraph with the word "SPRAWL" -- and yes, in all caps.

Requiring that development stay within the sewer grid is one of the simplest, least oppressive things local government can do to force builders into following a manageable timetable for urban growth.

"It so happens that sewer and roads are the two most important features in providing services in a logical fashion," said Ted James, the county's planning director.

But the county's new approach is not flying among a group of developers and land speculators who accuse planners of trying to stifle growth.

Frank St. Clair of the Rural Land Association says county government's sewer-line requirement unfairly hinders property owners' ability to develop their land.

"They're really trying to control growth. This is a backdoor sort of way of putting in growth limitations," St. Clair told *The Californian* last week.

Shoot, he decoded the secret message!

Yes, Frank, hopscotch growth stretches public services, creates infrastructure demands that hamstringing overtaxed county budgets and contributes to air pollution by forcing people to drive farther than they would otherwise. It makes farming -- the valley's most important industry -- more difficult than it is already.

The Rural Land Association argues that septic tanks are better and more reliable these days than decades ago, when the leaky septic tanks that turned Rexland Acres into an environmental disaster were

buried. OK, so? They're still septic tanks with finite lifespans. And water tables are not something we want to mess with. But that's a secondary concern here.

So is the Rural Land Association's complaint that the county did not properly address the California Environmental Quality Act, an allegation that's the basis of the RLA's February lawsuit. The group's grievance is just a red herring.

The real issue is whether the county has the right and the duty to manage development logically and affordably, encouraging infill, protecting our air and water, preserving agricultural production, protecting public safety and maximizing our tax dollars -- or whether developers ought to be able to build where they want, when they want, how they want.

The answer should be obvious to anyone who's ever seen a fire truck racing to a call at the rural western edge of Rosedale Highway. Local government needs some control over the big-picture development timetable. Simple. No decoder ring necessary.

[Tri-Valley Herald, Commentary, Friday, Sept. 8, 2006:](#)

### **Future won't favor new nuclear plants**

(From an Editorial in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune)

THE CLIMATE for building new nuclear power plants in the United States hasn't been this good for decades. The Bush administration is solidly behind them. Some prominent foes have changed sides, embracing uranium-derived electricity as the best available answer to global warming. Boosters are wearing told-you-so smiles.

And Congress is doing its best to help. After establishing liability limits and start-up assistance for new plants, it voted last year to offer utilities a variety of direct incentives and structured them to favor the first half-dozen plants to leave the drawing boards. Companies that design and build reactors are also said to be trying to jump-start new business by offering limited-time discounts.

Safety and environmental concerns have shaped public opinion, but the core reasons for America's 30-year hiatus in building new nuclear plants lie in unfavorable balance sheets. Industry analysts say the outlook is no brighter today despite the many factors — tougher pollution caps for coal plants, higher natural-gas prices, pending controls on greenhouse gas emissions — that theoretically should favor more cheap, clean nukes.

But to consider nuclear power "clean," you have to ignore the pesky problem of permanent waste disposal, and to consider it "cheap" you have to focus only on the ultimate cost to make a kilowatt-hour of juice over a span of decades. For any kind of power plant, a utility typically tries to pre-sell the power before it breaks ground, and customers just aren't as quick to sign long-term contracts for their power supplies when the electricity will be coming from uranium.

So for every utility like Constellation that opts for a new nuke, there will be multiple others that invest elsewhere — like Constellation's competitor, PPL, which decided to invest \$1.5 billion in cleaning up emissions from its coal burners. Besides environmental benefits, PPL expects further payoffs as pollution limits get tighter and, perhaps, as emissions reductions become tradeable assets.

On a smaller scale, but at an accelerating pace, private investment is moving toward alternative technologies of sustainable power generation, conservation and efficiency. The nuclear era that began with promises of electricity "too cheap to meter" has given way to a time when a dollar invested in conserving electricity returns six or seven times value of a dollar invested in making more of it.

So today the consensus seems to be that nukes have served their purpose, and will continue for a while to do so, but the future lies somewhere else.