

## **Valley smog fighters wage media battle**

### **Is the barrage of messages worth the cost of \$850,000 in public funds?**

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Saturday, May 23, 2009

The Valley's smog fight is going public with a bombardment of messages on billboards, at churches, in newspapers, on television -- at a price of more than \$850,000 in public money this year.

The advertising is successful and necessary, say officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

In winter, the messages tell people to check the district's Web site or call a toll-free line to find out if wood-burning is allowed. In summer, residents are urged to drive less, carpool and buy electric lawn equipment.

But one prominent critic of the ads -- Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter -- questions the wisdom of spending money on a publicity blitz.

"I don't understand using these precious dollars that could go to grants for cleaning the air instead going to promote current supervisors on the air board that have done nothing but vote against the many clean-air initiatives that I and other clean-air advocates have proposed," Florez said in an e-mail. "Save the TV costs, just have them sit in a room and run them on a projector to the board itself. It's their voting the right way that will clean the air, not hot air."

But air officials credit publicity for reducing unhealthy air days by 50% over the winter, because people heard the message about observing stricter fireplace wood-burning rules. About half of the \$850,000 was spent last winter.

"Fresno County had zero unhealthy days for the first time ever. Public outreach is the only way to get the word out there," said executive director Seyed Sadredin.

Officials don't get a lot of arguments from most environmentalists. Kern County resident Tom Franz of the Valley-based Association of Irrigated Residents has long criticized the district as not being aggressive enough, but not on the issue of investing money to inform the public.

"If it's spent wisely, it is money well-spent," he said. "You've got to change people's minds in the Valley."

Is the district wisely spending the money? Four of every five dollars goes directly into advertising and marketing in newspapers, television, radio, billboards and on the Internet.

About \$424,000 was spent on winter and fall marketing. Officials plan to spend \$377,400 this summer on the "Healthy Air Living" campaign, aimed at getting people to drive less and think more about air quality in their lives.

Another \$56,100 is budgeted to help people buy cleaner wood-burning stoves and electric lawn mowers, as well as fund the district's annual air quality symposium, which promotes clean-air practices for businesses and private residents.

The \$857,500 for such advertising and marketing -- a 2% increase from the previous year -- comes from the district's \$35.9 million budget. Most of the advertising and marketing funding comes from vehicle registration fees.

The district's investment is modest for a campaign as complex as changing the public's behavior to reduce air pollution, say some experts. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District spends

\$4 million annually on advertising, marketing and public outreach. The Bay Area had 12 federal ozone violations last year. The Valley had 127.

"How do you get people to carpool?" asked Lisa Fasano, Bay Area district communications director. "It's the hardest thing we do. I'd say the Valley air district's \$850,000 is a drop in the bucket."

Michael Kirby, a Southern California creative consultant who has worked on social marketing campaigns for many years, agreed: "The best marketing works on an emotional level. You won't get that out of a press release."

The Valley air district's advertising and marketing program amounts to less than 30 cents per person in the Valley. Officials estimate it helped trim up to 16 tons of wood-burning soot daily during winter -- a whopping reduction for the money.

By comparison, some air district rules require multimillion-dollar industry investments in technologies that sometimes yield less than a ton per day of pollution reduction.

District officials say they now will use the outreach program to break some big news to businesses: they will be required to reduce employee commutes to fight Valley ozone.

There will be summits in Fresno, Bakersfield and Modesto in early June. The two-hour sessions will showcase options, such as telecommuting, flexible work schedules and carpooling. Firms with 100 employees or more will have to figure a way to reduce employee commuting.

In the past, such rules have included fees for businesses that do not conform. For instance, builders pay an extra fee if they do not include enough air-friendly improvements in new subdivisions. The district also plans public meetings at libraries, community centers and churches in 15 cities from Tracy in San Joaquin County to Arvin in Kern County. They are billed as public chats just to talk about air quality.

Jaime Holt, the district's chief communications officer, said advertising is important, but face-to-face conversations must be part of the formula. In addition, the district is using social-networking tools online, such as Facebook and Twitter.

"There is no silver bullet," she said. "We need everyone to become involved to reach the federal standard. We're trying to reach people any way we can."

#### **DECEMBER SPENDING**

\*English-language television \$74,653

\*English-language radio \$43,604

\*Spanish TV-radio \$44,341

\*Punjabi radio \$1,500

\*JSA consultant \$1,000

\*Media shipping \$109

**TOTAL** \$165,207

**SOURCE:** Valley Air Pollution Control District December spending

### **Air district spending on ads to fight smog argued**

By Mark Grossi

In the Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Monday, May 25, 2009

FRESNO -- The valley's smog fight is going public with a bombardment of messages on billboards, at churches, in newspapers, on television -- at a price of more than \$850,000 in public money this year.

The advertising is successful and necessary, say officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

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But one prominent critic of the ads, Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, questions the wisdom of spending money on a publicity blitz.

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But air officials credit publicity for reducing unhealthy air days by 50 percent over the winter, because people heard the message about observing stricter use of fireplaces. About half of the \$850,000 was spent last winter.

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'Healthy Air Living'

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By comparison, some air district rules require multimillion-dollar investments in technologies that sometimes yield less than a ton per day of pollution reduction.

District officials say they will use advertising to tell businesses they will be required to reduce worker commutes to fight valley ozone.

Summits in Fresno, Bakersfield and Modesto in early June will showcase options, such as telecommuting, flexible work schedules and car pooling.

## **Report considers valley commuting options**

**Van pools, ride-sharing suggested over waiting for high-cost rail**

By Garth Stapley

Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Commuter rail from Modesto to the Bay Area or Sacramento is a nice, far-off dream. The more realistic, short-term promise lies in van pooling, a report acknowledges.

Leaders from Lodi to Bakersfield pooled \$200,000 for the San Joaquin Valley Express Transit Study, the valley's first comprehensive look at commute options.

Its author predicts that valley workers heading over the Altamont Pass will increase from 42,000 in 2000 to 74,000 by 2030. Those commuting to Sacramento will jump from 10,100 to 19,500 in the same period, NelsonNygaard Consulting Associates concludes.

But rail projects take huge amounts of time and money. A line from Stockton to Merced via Modesto could cost \$200 million.

Leaders should continue courting the dream, but might pour more energy into ride-sharing, consultant Bonnie Nelson said. And in light of serious pending cuts to local transit money by cash-starved state officials, the valley might do well simply to retain its successful interregional bus routes, she said.

"Let's hang on to what we've got," Nelson said.

Such services from Modesto include buses to Altamont Commute Express trains carrying 3,500 riders daily, including about 350 from Stanislaus County.

The valley could work with air pollution officials to create more rules favoring ride-sharing, the study suggests, and leaders might create a regional ride-matching database.

The report also looks at connecting Southern California with south valley counties such as Kern, Tulare and Fresno. Commuters from the Los Angeles area to those counties will climb from 12,000 to 26,000 by 2030, NelsonNygaard predicts.

The valley's eight counties must avoid competing for transportation funding, Nelson said.

"When the whole valley bands together, does things in unison and recognizes that what benefits part of the valley benefits the whole valley, you have a whole lot more clout, a whole lot more power," Nelson said.

Transportation leaders throughout the valley are being asked to endorse the study. The issue is likely to go before the policy board of the Stanislaus Council of Governments at 6 p.m. June 10 in the basement chamber at Tenth Street Place, 1010 10th St., Modesto.

## **Local students debate Wal-Mart issue**

By Maggie Creamer, News-Sentinel Staff Writer  
Lodi News Sentinel, Friday, May 22, 2009

Clad in over-sized suits and dresses with sneakers, about 25 Lodi middle school students held notecards with trembling hands and spoke with shaky voices.

The teens attempted to answer a question that has been discussed incessantly in Lodi for the past seven years: Does Lodi need a Wal-Mart Supercenter?

"We're teenagers. We like to fight with people," said Samantha Titus, an eight-grader at Millswood Middle School. "We fight with our parents, so we should use our ability to debate."

During the month before the debate, students had spent hours after school training with teachers and staff from the Lodi Boys and Girls Club. Seventh-grade history teacher Marlon Gayle said he had a hard time getting the all-girl team from Christa McAuliffe Middle School to leave school on Fridays.

"We give our heart into it," said Jessinia Ahrens, a McAuliffe seventh-grader. "We take it seriously, but we have fun with it."

The Thursday night showdown between six middle schools was the fourth and final debate. This is the first time the school district has tried an after-school debate program.

Those in favor of the Wal-Mart Supercenter argued that it will create jobs in a tough economy, provide the city with extra revenue, give consumers low prices and even [reduce gas emissions](#) by letting people shop for clothes, get their nails done and eat at McDonald's all in the same location.

"It'll give jobs to clerks and employees not only in the store, but lawyers and construction workers are needed for the construction (as well)," said Amber Buhagiar, a seventh-grader at Delta Sierra Middle School

Students opposed to a Supercenter talked about how businesses could close, whether it would make Lodi lose its small-town feel, the [increased pollution](#) and other environmental impacts from a Supercenter, and Wal-Mart not paying its workers enough.

"Are these jobs that we really want when they are denying healthcare?" said Berkley Price, an eighth-grade Millswood student.

Since starting debate, Jeisen Elemen has noticed that the team of three boys and two girls that he coaches are less nervous with public speaking.

"They were very quiet," Elemen said. "Now, they are coming up and speaking out in front of a live audience," he said.

Eighth-grader Dario Leventini said that since joining Elemen's debate club, he has learned better research techniques.

"It will be a good experience if you are going to debate in high school," Leventini said.

After judging three of the debates, the students have come a long way, said Kevin Harkin, who is the vice president of the Bridge After School Program for the district. The students have learned the proper way to dress, how to slow down when they are talking, and to speak louder.

Next year, Harkin hopes the debate clubs will have more students participating. The skills will be helpful when the students do Senior Projects in high school, and he said some might even be able to get scholarships for college with their skills.

"They learn how to research a topic, think on their feet and present themselves in front of a crowd," Harkin said.

## **Wellnews: All the news that's fit**

By Scott LaFee, Union-Tribune Staff Writer  
San Diego Union-Tribune, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Hold your breath

Everyone knows that breathing polluted air is bad for one's health. Now comes news that you don't even have to breathe a lot of it.

Italian scientists report that inhaling polluted air for as little as three days can cause some genes to undergo reprogramming, which may affect a person's risk of developing cancer and other diseases.

In a paper presented at last week's International Conference of the American Thoracic Society in San Diego, the scientists compared the blood DNA of healthy workers exposed to high levels of

airborne particulates at a foundry near Milan for three days. They found changes in four genes linked to tumor suppression.

On the plus side, the gene changes appear to be reversible once air quality improves.

If you must travel through dirty, polluted air, it might be wise to stay in your car with the air conditioner running. A German study found that a good automobile A/C system eliminates more than 80 percent of the germs, fungal spores and particles from outside air.

Of course, the system must be properly maintained, with air filters regularly changed. The researchers also recommend having the A/C system examined as soon as car users smell any suspicious odor.

## **Bill to rein in Oakland port emissions creates flap**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

A dispute about reducing diesel emissions from trucks, ships and trains at the Port of Oakland to protect public health is boiling over into the California Legislature.

Assemblyman Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, has introduced a bill aimed at pressuring the city-owned port to speed up its efforts to curb diesel emissions, which elevate the cancer risk in parts of western Alameda and Contra Costa counties — especially in West Oakland.

"It's important to hold the port accountable for the pollution that is an important public health issue," said Hill, former chairman of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District board and a former member of the California Air Resources Board.

He contends the port has dragged its feet in cleaning up the air.

Hill's Assembly Bill 431 would require the port to take pollution-reduction measures equally as "stringent" as those taken by the Long Beach and Los Angeles ports.

The bill would leave it up to the nine-county Bay Area air-quality district to say whether the port was meeting the standard.

Officials with the port, maritime and railroad industries, and the California Chamber of Commerce oppose the bill as unwise state regulation of the nation's fifth-busiest port, a landlord attracting many private trucks, ships and trains.

"We believe this would add a duplicative set of regulation that would be counterproductive to the goal of improving air quality," said Richard Sinkoff, the port's director of environmental programs. "We want to move forward in cleaning up air. This is not the way to do it."

The debate moves to Sacramento this week when the Assembly Select Committee on Ports holds a hearing at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday in room 447 of the state Capitol to examine efforts by California ports to reduce diesel emissions.

"While the recession is putting new pressures on our ports, we still have to prepare for a future of greener ports," said Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, head of the select committee on ports.

The California Air Resources Board has passed a series of vehicle and fuel rules to cut port diesel emissions. One rule bars old diesel trucks from visiting ports after Jan. 1, 2010, unless they install diesel filters.

Bay Area air-quality regulators, environmentalists and some neighbors say the Port of Oakland should do more to improve air quality ahead of the regulatory deadlines.

The critics said the Oakland port has lagged behind the two Southern California ports, which have adopted freight container fees to fund clean-air measures, and adopted a ban ahead of the state deadline on old diesel trucks using ports.

"Instead of investing more in filters and other measures to reduce the toxic threat of diesel, the port is allowing the lungs of West Oakland residents be used as particulate filters," said Mark Ross, a Bay Area air board member on the Martinez City Council.

Sinkoff, the port's environmental director, said the port is committed to clean air, but the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports have more resources to fight pollution problems because those two ports, combined, handle seven times the volume of cargo that Oakland handles.

Plus, Oakland port container volumes this year are down about 15 percent from last year, he said.

Two other members of the Bay Area air board — Alameda County Supervisors Scott Haggerty, of Dublin, and Nate Miley, of Oakland, — said they oppose Hill's bill. They said they worry about the potential economic harm to the port, and they believe the port has made progress toward cleaning up diesel. "It's too early to use the sledgehammer approach," Haggerty said.

As a sign of progress toward cleaner air, port officials point to their adoption last month of a clean-air plan setting the framework for some \$650 million in pollution-reduction measures through 2020.

Port commissioners also agreed last month to restore \$5 million for diesel filter grants for truckers.

But many port critics, including the California Air Resources Board and federal Environmental Protection Agency, said the port's pollution plan is skimpy on detailed commitments.

"The port sets wonderful cleanup goals," said Doug Bloch, director of the Oakland Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, "but then they have done almost nothing to follow through with details and commitments."

## **Colusa power plant shows importance of fossil fuels**

By Jim Downing

Sacramento Bee, Sunday, May 24, 2009

The Capitol may be buzzing about renewable energy, but 70 miles up Interstate 5, the biggest thing going is a new Pacific Gas and Electric Co. power plant that will run on natural gas.

In Colusa County, which routinely has the state's highest unemployment rate, officials are looking to the billion-dollar project as a bit of an economic balm. As many as 650 construction workers will build the plant — though most will come from outside the county. Taxes on the project should give a nearly 10 percent boost to the county's general fund.

"There's never been any single thing of this magnitude — and there may never be again," said county supervisor Gary Evans, whose family moved to the area in 1868.

The 660-megawatt project also shows how important fossil fuels remain to the electricity sector, even in a state with the nation's boldest commitment to develop renewable power and cut greenhouse-gas emissions.

Despite California's nation-leading energy-efficiency programs, overall power demand continues to grow. After a lull in power-plant openings in the state for the past two years, in 2009 a projected 2.2 gigawatts of new gas power will fire up — more than all the solar, wind and other renewable power capacity built in the state over the past six years.

The Colusa plant, big enough to serve roughly 500,000 homes, is scheduled to begin operating late next year. State regulators are reviewing applications for major new plants near Vacaville and Lodi as well.

To be sure, the Colusa project is about as clean and efficient as fossil fuel-based electricity gets. The plant captures waste heat from its gas turbines and uses it to generate power. It uses 97 percent less water than many older units, PG&E said.

And even in a future dominated by renewable power, some fossil fuel-fired plants will be needed to provide the reliable, on-demand juice needed to keep the grid running smoothly. Better those plants be as clean and modern as possible, renewable-power advocates say.

"A gas-fired plant ... is a plausible part of a green-technology portfolio," said Ralph Cavanagh, energy program co-director at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "We don't want to give a free pass to the dirty old plants, and if we stop building cleaner new generation, we run the risk of doing exactly that."

A 2002 law established California's renewable-energy targets. By 2010, PG&E and the state's other two big private utilities are supposed to get 20 percent of all their electricity from renewable sources – chiefly solar, wind, geothermal, biomass and small-scale hydroelectric. Public power providers like the Sacramento Municipal Utility District generally have an extra year or two to meet the goal.

Bills now in the Legislature would mandate a steep increase in renewable power through the next decade – to 33 percent of all the state's power by 2020.

For now, though, the state's big utilities, and many of the smaller ones as well, are likely to be several years late meeting their 20 percent goal.

It wasn't until last year that renewable power projects started to come online in significant numbers. And now the bad economy has squeezed financing. It has proved difficult to build new transmission lines and get permits for large-scale renewable projects, such as giant solar power plants in the Southern California deserts.

In 2008, the state got 13.5 percent of its power from renewables, compared with 11 percent in 2002, according to the California Energy Commission.

PG&E and the other private utilities could face fines of \$25 million annually for missing the 2010 deadline. But the enforcement process is complex and penalties stand to be delayed for several years.

Environmental groups say it's important to keep the pressure on utilities to meet their obligations, but they generally aren't fussing over the slow progress.

"It's just a matter of getting the projects built," said Laura Wisland, energy analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists. That's not likely to happen, though, until several years after the deadline, she said.

## **Money for your mower**

By Matt Hickman, Mother Nature Network  
In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

If you gotta mow, you gotta mow. But if you hold off for a spell, you may be eligible for a 25 percent tax credit, up to \$1,000, when purchasing a low or no-emission, energy-efficient lawn mower.

According to The Wall Street Journal, three congressional delegates from Vermont created legislation - "The Greener Gardens Act" - last month that aims to reward consumers purchasing eco-friendly lawn and garden power tools. If it passes, the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute-endorsed bill will provide "immediate incentive for people to purchase clean, alternative fuel engines that ... operate on little or no fossil fuel." More specifically:

"Qualifying equipment would include that powered by a motor drawing current from solar, electricity or rechargeable or replacement batteries, as well as equipment run off other alternatives to gasoline such as propane or compressed natural gas. It would also include "hybrid" machines whose cutting systems are powered by a generator or electrical storage device combines with a small engine."

Totally cool. In my household, lawn mowers, weed whackers, hedge trimmers, and the like were always popular Father's Day gifts. With Dad's Day on the horizon, you may want write Dad an IOU, save a few bucks, and wait until the bill passes (knock on FSC-certified wood). Lowered air pollution = the gift that keeps on giving.

Need some low or no-emission lawn mower suggestions? See: [www.mnn.com/the-home/gardening-landscaping/blogs/mow-town-hits](http://www.mnn.com/the-home/gardening-landscaping/blogs/mow-town-hits)

Matt Hickman writes about the best ways to go green at home on this blog: [www.mnn.com/featured-blogs/greenhome](http://www.mnn.com/featured-blogs/greenhome).

## **What do the new fuel rules mean?**

By Dan Strumpf, The Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Automakers are fully behind the Obama administration's new set of fuel economy rules unveiled last week. But make no mistake -- these regulations will not be easy for them to meet.

The new rules call for manufacturers to reach an overall fleet average of 35.5 mpg by 2016, with passenger cars reaching 39 mpg and light trucks hitting 30 mpg under a system that develops standards for each vehicle class size. Manufacturers also would be required to hit individual mileage targets.

The regulations are expected to cut American oil use by billions of barrels, which is equivalent to removing hundreds of millions of cars from U.S. roads. But they are expected to cost car buyers an extra \$1,300 per vehicle by the time the plan is complete.

The new rules also will have a cost for automakers, who will have to pour billions more dollars into new technologies to help them meet those goals. The Transportation Department last year estimated that requiring the industry to meet a looser standard of 31.6 mpg by 2015 would cost nearly \$47 billion.

Here are some questions and answers about what the automakers will need to do to achieve the new standards for emissions and fuel economy:

Q: How big a challenge will this be for the industry?

A: To get an idea of how far away the auto industry is from the new benchmarks, consider this: Only six vehicles on sale today offer fuel economy of at least 35.5 mpg, according to the auto Web site Edmunds.com. They are the Toyota Prius, the Honda Insight, the Honda Civic hybrid, the Ford Fusion hybrid, the Mercury Milan hybrid and the Smart microcar.

Q: What are they going to do to meet these requirements?

A: For starters, manufacturers have vehicles in the pipeline that will help them clear the new hurdles, and they likely will announce more.

Ford is bringing fuel efficient small cars such as the Fiesta to North America in the coming years and is planning to put fully electric cars in showrooms by 2011. General Motors Corp. still plans to debut its Chevrolet Volt plug-in electric car next year, provided it isn't derailed by bankruptcy.

Chrysler LLC also has plans to introduce electric cars and small cars from Italian automaker Fiat Group SpA.

Toyota and Honda will ramp up hybrid and plug-in vehicle production in the coming years.

Q: Are there other technologies that will help automakers meet the new regulations?

A: Besides more conventional hybrids and extended-range plug-ins such as the Volt, expect to see so-called clean diesel cars such as the Volkswagen Jetta TDI.

Extended-range plug-ins rely on a rechargeable battery for short distances, then a combination of gas and electric power for longer trips. Clean diesels use technology that filters out particulate matter and offers better fuel economy.

Automakers plan to introduce more exclusively electric vehicles. Meanwhile, companies including GM and Honda have long experimented with hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles, though they remain a long way off.

"There's all kinds of technologies that can be brought" to market, said Aaron Bragman, an auto analyst with the consulting firm IHS-Global Insight.

Q: When assessing a manufacturer's fuel economy rating, how will miles per gallon be calculated for vehicles such as plug-in hybrids, which can be driven without using a drop of fuel as long as they don't travel too far at a time?

A: That isn't yet known. The Environmental Protection Agency has said it is working on how to measure the fuel economy for these sorts of vehicles, and for pure electric cars and vehicles with other exotic powertrains.

Q: Could there be some unintended side effects of the new policy, in terms of what the manufacturers produce and sell?

A: U.S. automakers have long been criticized for relying too much on trucks and sport utility vehicles. And Jeremy Anwyl, chief executive of Edmunds.com, said the new rules might not change that because the fuel-economy standard for light trucks remains lower than the one for cars.

"In the United States, trucks have been sort of given a free pass on the (fuel-economy) standard," Anwyl said. "What's been happening is the automakers are building more and more vehicles and labeling them as light trucks."

As for cars, one easy way to boost fuel economy is to make them smaller. But that could raise questions about vehicle safety, Anwyl said.

Q: I like my SUV because it's comfortable, fun to drive and makes me and my family feel safe. Does this spell the end of big SUVs such as the Cadillac Escalade and the Hummer H3?

A: Even the hybrid version of the Escalade gets a relatively weak 20 mpg. Hummer, which GM has been trying to sell for some time, does not have a promising future under the new standards. All in all, the new rules could lead to a dramatic reshaping of the vehicles available in U.S. showrooms.

"The new regulations may indeed affect what vehicles are available for purchase nationally, and they are sure to spell the end for less efficient offerings in various segments," Bragman said in a research report.

## **Company looks to bring air-powered cars to US**

By Dan Strumpf, AP Auto Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Monday, May 25, 2009

NEW YORK -- Most car companies are racing to bring electric vehicles to the market. But one startup is skipping the high-tech electronics, making cars whose energy source is pulled literally out of thin air.

Zero Pollution Motors is trying to bring a car to U.S. roads by early 2011 that's powered by a combination of compressed air and a small conventional engine.

ZPM Chief Executive Shiva Vencat said the ultimate goal is a price tag between \$18,000 and \$20,000, fuel economy equivalent to 100 miles per gallon and a tailpipe that emits nothing but air at low enough speeds.

Elsewhere in the world, the technology is already gaining speed. The French startup Motor Development International, which licensed the technology to ZPM, unveiled a new air-powered car at the Geneva Auto Show in March. Airlines KLM and Air France are starting to test the bubble-shaped AirPod this month for use as transportation around airports.

Engineering experts, however, are skeptical of the technology, saying it is clouded by the caveat that compressing air is notoriously energy intensive.

"Air compressors are one of the least efficient machines to convert electricity to work," said Harold Kung, professor of chemical and biological engineering at Northwestern University. "Why not use the electricity directly, as in electric cars? From an energy utilization point of view, the compressed (air) car does not make sense."

As Vencat spells it out, the "air cars" plug into a wall outlet, allowing an on-board compressor to pressurize the car's air tank to 4,500 pounds per square inch. It takes about four hours to get the tank to full pressure, then the air is then released gradually to power the car's pistons.

At speeds less than 35 mph, the car relies entirely on the air tank and emits only cold air. At faster speeds, a small conventionally fueled engine kicks in to run a heater that warms the air and speeds its release. The engine also refills the air tank, extending the range and speed.

The technology behind the car was developed by the French race car engineer Guy Negre, head of Motor Development International. Besides ZPM, Negre has licensed the technology to Indian car giant Tata Motors and others.

Many of the specifications of ZPM's car are still speculative, but Vencat expects it to go about 20 miles on compressed air alone, and hundreds more after the engine kicks in, with a top speed of 96 mph.

The technology shouldn't sound too outlandish, Vencat said. It's similar to the internal-combustion engines in conventional cars - the main difference is the fuel.

"Every single car you see out there, except an electric car, is a compressed-air car," he said. "It takes air in the chamber and it pushes the piston, and the only way you push the piston is through pressure."

James Van de Ven, a mechanical engineering assistant professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute who has studied compressed-air technology, said air compressors allow you to recover only 25 to 30 percent of the energy used to compress the air. The rest is lost through heat, air leakage and other forms of waste, he said.

While that's still slightly better a gasoline engine, it pales compared with the efficiencies of other alternative-fuel powertrains, like those in hybrid-electric cars, which have an efficiency closer to 80 percent, Van de Ven said.

A look at some of ZPM's specifications illustrates the issue. With four hours of charging, the air car's 5.5-kilowatt compressor would eat up 22 kilowatt-hours of electricity. That means the same energy used to turn on 10 100-watt light bulbs for 22 hours would allow the car to travel 20 miles.

By comparison, General Motors Corp. has said its Chevrolet Volt will use about 8 kilowatt-hours of energy to fully charge, and it will be able to travel 40 miles on battery power alone.

George Haley, business professor at the University of New Haven, said U.S. safety regulations could be another obstacle given the air car's tiny size and light weight.

Vencat said he gets such criticism "from the whole wide world" and pays it little mind. He counters that the car is cleaner than any internal combustion engine and remarkably simpler - and cheaper - than more advanced powertrains currently under development.

"The big difference is that the (Chevrolet) Volt needs the battery," Vencat said. The Volt's massive lithium-ion battery is a big part of the reason it is expected to cost about \$40,000 when it goes on sale late next year.

He acknowledges the difficulties with getting the car out quickly but said he is lining up investors.

"You know, we've got a lot of people who wanted the car yesterday," he said.

## **House committee OKs climate-change bill**

By Jennifer A. Dlouhy, Hearst Newspapers

In the S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Friday, May 22, 2009

Washington - -- Democratic leaders' plan to impose the first national limits on greenhouse gases cleared a major congressional hurdle Thursday when a House committee passed sweeping climate-change legislation.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee voted 33-25 - mostly along party lines - to approve the far-reaching energy measure. It now goes to the full House for debate later this year.

It was a major achievement for committee Chairman Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco; and Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., who spent months struggling to piece together a climate-change bill that could win enough support to get out of the 59-member panel.

Markey called the vote a "turning point in the history of the relationship this nation has with energy and the environment."

The key breakthrough came in concessions Waxman made to rust belt and oil-patch Democrats designed to cushion oil refiners, steel manufacturers and the coal industry from some higher costs expected under the bill.

Still, the narrowness of the vote - and the defection of four Democrats who voted with 21 Energy and Commerce Republicans against the legislation - signaled the challenges still facing Waxman in pushing his climate-change plan through Congress.

Waxman downplayed the significance of the Democratic "no" votes, saying he understood "the concerns of those who felt they had to vote against the bill." Waxman predicted he would "gain in support" as the bill moves through Congress.

The cornerstone of the 946-page bill is a plan to force businesses to meet steadily tightening limits on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions or buy allowances to spew more of the heat-trapping pollutants. The measure seeks to trim the emissions to 17 percent below 2005 levels in 2020.

The legislation also aims to spur renewable power by requiring utilities to derive more of their electricity from wind, the sun and other easily replenished sources.

Republicans have widely panned the bill, saying it is tantamount to a national "energy tax" that would devastate the already weakened U.S. economy and make American businesses less competitive in the international marketplace.

Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., warned of "a worsening economy that this bill could bring about."

During four days of debate, Democrats repeatedly turned back Republican proposals to undercut the so-called cap-and-trade plan by requiring it to be scrapped if electricity bills jump, the unemployment rate spikes, coal mines close or other countries don't impose similar emissions limits.

The GOP proposals were aimed at pressuring politically vulnerable Democrats in the South and the rust-belt Midwest.

"We want to send a message to the American people that we want to protect them from what we think are the potential ravages of this bill," said Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas.

Democrats and environmental advocates said the measure was urgently needed to combat the Earth's rising temperature.

Markey said the bill promises "a new dawn of energy" in the United States. The legislation "is going to create a new generation of clean jobs," Markey said, and turn the nation back from "that 14 million barrels of oil we consume each day."

The measure is a top priority for Pelosi and the Obama administration, which wants to be able to highlight a U.S. plan for capping greenhouse gases during international climate-change negotiations in Copenhagen next month.

Despite Waxman's success Thursday, the path of his legislation to the House floor - much less congressional passage - is complicated by the potential involvement of as many as nine House committees.

Democrats and Republicans on the House Agriculture Committee are weighing big changes to the measure, especially to provisions that could promote biofuels made from nonedible plant materials. That panel's chairman, Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., has been an outspoken critic of the climate-change bill.

Separately, the Ways and Means Committee, headed by Rep. Charlie Rangel, D-N.Y., is poised to play a major role in deciding how to dole out the federal government's revenues from selling emissions allowances.

Many of that panel's decisions risk shredding the delicate compromise forged by Waxman.

## **Startup banking on idea of air-powered cars**

By Dan Strumpf, Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

New York -- Most car companies are racing to bring electric vehicles to the market. But one startup is skipping the high-tech electronics, making cars whose energy source is pulled literally out of thin air.

Zero Pollution Motors is trying to bring a car to U.S. roads by early 2011 that's powered by a combination of compressed air and a small conventional engine.

ZPM chief executive Shiva Vencat said the ultimate goal is a price tag between \$18,000 and \$20,000, fuel economy equivalent to 100 miles per gallon and a tailpipe that emits nothing but air at low enough speeds.

Engineering experts, however, are skeptical of the technology, saying it is clouded by the caveat that compressing air is notoriously energy intensive.

"Air compressors are one of the least-efficient machines to convert electricity to work," said Harold Kung, professor of chemical and biological engineering at Northwestern University. "Why not use the electricity directly, as in electric cars? From an energy-utilization point of view, the compressed (air) car does not make sense."

As Vencat spells it out, the "air cars" plug into a wall outlet, allowing an on-board compressor to pressurize the car's air tank to 4,500 pounds per square inch. It takes about four hours to get the tank to full pressure, then the air is released gradually to power the car's pistons.

At speeds less than 35 mph, the car relies entirely on the air tank and emits only cold air. At higher speeds, a small, conventionally fueled engine kicks in to run a heater that warms the air and speeds its release.

The engine also refills the air tank, extending the range and speed.

Many of the specifications of ZPM's car are still speculative, but Vencat expects it to go about 20 miles on compressed air alone, and hundreds more after the engine kicks in, with a top speed of 96 mph.

With four hours of charging, the air car's 5.5-kilowatt compressor would eat up 22 kilowatt-hours of electricity. That means the same energy used to turn on 10 100-watt light bulbs for 22 hours would allow the car to travel 20 miles.

By comparison, General Motors Corp. has said its Chevrolet Volt will use about 8 kilowatt-hours of energy to fully charge, and it will be able to travel 40 miles on battery power alone.

## **U.S. business-government relations undergo a climate change**

### **Corporate America is helping craft new rules as Obama pushes for tougher standards on vehicle fuel efficiency and other issues.**

By Jim Puzzanghera

L.A. Times, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Reporting from Washington -- Under bright spring sunshine, the mood at the White House was celebratory last week as President Obama announced an agreement on new rules to force drastic improvements in the fuel efficiency and tailpipe emissions of the nation's cars and trucks.

But what made the Rose Garden audience unusual was not the environmentalists and liberal Democrats, who have long supported such requirements. The surprise was the presence of executives from the world's 10 largest automobile makers, most of whom had fought long and hard to avoid tougher standards. Like other businesses, however, they had joined with the Obama administration to help craft new rules for their industry.

The lions-and-lambs quality of the gathering suggested that a new paradigm was developing in the relationship between government and business.

In the space of only a week or so, there was significant movement not only on vehicle fuel efficiency but also on similarly contentious issues including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by factories and power plants, subjecting tobacco to new health and safety supervision, and overhauling healthcare coverage.

In each case, the forward movement took place with significant industry participation and input.

"It's no secret that these are folks who've occasionally been at odds for years, even decades," Obama said, remarking on the diversity of the crowd gathered for the auto standards announcement. "In fact, some of the groups here have been embroiled in lawsuits against one another."

Although he was talking about the environmentalists and automakers, the observation applied equally to stakeholders on the other issues, who have long been mired in stalemate and bitter conflict and now seem to have opted for at least some cooperation.

On each of these issues, final agreement on new policies is months away. And as they get deeper into the specifics, the old adversaries could come to blows again.

But the relationship between government and business appears to be undergoing a fundamental restructuring, similar to what happened during the New Deal of the 1930s and the deregulatory push of the Reagan administration in the 1980s, said Robert N. Stavins, a professor of business and government at Harvard University.

Those shifts have been fueled by deep economic troubles accompanied by a sharp change in national political control, leading to a vastly different philosophy about how Washington should interact with corporations, he said.

"There is a changing climate with regard to the relationship between business and government," Stavins said. "In the Congress and in the executive office of the president and administration, there is a movement toward greater interest in playing a hand in the private economy."

Some of these changes were underway before Obama's election, particularly in healthcare, where businesses have become increasingly concerned about the burden of spiraling costs in an era of global competition.

"It's one of the issues where I can't name any one individual company, association or organization that says we don't need to do anything," said R. Bruce Josten, the chief lobbyist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has been working with the Obama administration and key lawmakers on healthcare reform.

"We're looking for somebody to do something, and the only ones who can get things done is the administration."

The financial crisis and recession have accelerated the process, amplifying the costs of failing to act and increasing the likelihood of bold government action.

With Democrats' desire to tackle issues they could not move on during the Bush presidency, corporate executives see the writing on the wall, said David M. Hart, associate professor of public policy at George Mason University.

"Smart businesses try to stay ahead of the curve, and if they see the train coming down the track . . . try to shift its direction a little bit," he said.

"Clearly the business community is being very pragmatic about this. They see that change is going to happen," Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said in an interview. "They can either sit on the sidelines and watch the legislation go by or they can help shape the legislation."

Corporate America is not cooperating on every issue and has worked to derail some of the president's proposals. Business groups have successfully fought back legislation supported by Obama and organized labor to make it easier for workers to form unions.

The U.S. chamber has also sharply criticized Obama's "cap and trade" proposal to limit greenhouse gas emissions. And credit card issuers strongly opposed landmark legislation placing new restrictions on them, including the ability to raise interest rates. But the credit card legislation passed Congress and Obama signed it Friday, demonstrating the sharp public and political backlash against big business caused by the financial crisis.

Obama and the Democrats are taking advantage of that weakness, said John Steele Gordon, a business historian.

"They see this opportunity and they're pushing it, and a lot of the business community is not in particularly good shape right now," he said.

Obama has channeled some of the public anger himself, often talking tough about the practices of corporate chief executives and U.S. corporations. He slammed them last month for abusing overseas tax loopholes as he proposed a plan to close the loopholes.

Locke, the administration's chief liaison to the business community, said Obama was committed

to helping businesses even though he has criticized of some of their practices.

"It's no different than a parent who says to a child, 'I am very disappointed in your behavior here, and we think what you did is wrong and unwise, but we still want you to succeed,' " Locke said.

Obama has alternated between tough talk and engagement. In recent weeks he has met with CEOs from banks, credit card issuers, pharmaceutical companies and insurers. And he has sympathized with their plight even as he has pushed for changes.

"Credit card companies provide a valuable service; we don't begrudge them turning a profit," he said in signing the new law Friday. "We just want to make sure that they do so while upholding basic standards of fairness, transparency and accountability."

Locke said the economic realities of issues such as rising healthcare costs combined with Obama's commitment to tackle them had led to new partnerships.

"You're seeing all this collaboration and cooperation simply because all the forces are in alignment for change," he said. "You have an American public very much wanting solutions to these tough issues, you have a president who was elected on the promise of change, you've got control of Congress that will support the president, and the business community wants change as well."

## **Nation Digest**

By David A. Fahrenthold  
Washington Post, Friday, May 22, 2009

**EPA Restores Scientists' Role:** The Environmental Protection Agency announced a change in the way it considers changes to air-quality standards, reversing a Bush administration decision that was criticized for emphasizing politics over science. The change reinstates a practice of asking for a "staff paper," an opinion prepared by EPA scientists, as a step in the process of setting or resetting standards for pollutants such as smog.

## **China: Rich nations must cut emissions by 40%**

By Elaine Kurtenbach, Associated Press  
In the USA Today, Friday, May 22, 2009

SHANGHAI — Wealthy nations, as history's biggest polluters, should cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40% from 1990 levels by 2020, China says in a policy document on climate change. The government also rolled out fresh help for solar power and other "green energy."

The reductions China is calling for are based on the principles of "historical responsibility and fairness," the position paper says, and set a hard line ahead of international negotiations on addressing global warming.

A U.N. conference set for December in Copenhagen aims to draft a new agreement on controlling carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases that scientists say are causing the Earth to warm. Delegates will meet in Bonn, Germany, next month to begin discussing the text of that agreement.

China's position paper was posted Thursday on the website of the National Development and Planning Commission, the country's main economic planning agency.

Meanwhile, the government announced new support for solar and wind power and other renewable energy sources.

In a meeting Thursday with provincial officials, the Ministry of Finance promised 38 billion yuan (\$5.6 billion) in subsidies to promote wider use of wind and solar power and encourage the use of energy efficient cars and appliances, state-run media reported Friday.

China, which relies on heavily polluting coal for about three-quarters of its electricity, has sought to spotlight its efforts to improve energy efficiency and cut emissions, but has not committed to specific targets in climate talks.

The policy document issued this week gave no specific targets for China or other developing countries, but instead reiterated demands for technology transfers and other support.

Rich countries should provide at least 0.5% to 1% of their annual gross domestic product to help developing countries upgrade technology, cut emissions and adapt to the consequences of climate change, the document said.

China has welcomed President Obama's commitment to tackle climate change and re-engage in the international negotiations to come to an agreement in December.

But despite that shift, "the developed world has yet to do its due part in tackling climate change," the official newspaper China Daily said Friday in a commentary.

"No solution to fight global warming will be genuine enough, and thus practical enough, if developed countries keep glossing over their historical responsibility on this issue," it said.

The U.S. — which also has not issued targets for reducing emissions — has said that any agreement to combat global warming should require developing countries like India and China to reduce emissions.

Together, the U.S. and China are the world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, accounting for 40% of the global total.

While visiting Prague this week, Premier Wen Jiabao shrugged off pressure from the European Union for China to commit to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, though he backed EU efforts to reach a new global climate change accord to replace the U.N. Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

The EU says it will reduce emissions by 20% by 2020 and will go to 30% if major world nations will make similar cuts.

Experts say emissions must peak in 2015 and then fall by half by 2050 to limit global warming.

## **Global CEOs back greenhouse gas cuts, carbon caps**

By John Heilprin, Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

COPENHAGEN -- A global summit of business leaders urged governments to order steep and mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases Tuesday, favoring a cap-and-trade system instead of a tax to set a market price for carbon waste.

The strong consensus among the 500 CEOs and other top business experts attending the World Business Summit on Climate Change added momentum to prospects of forging a new U.N. climate treaty in six months.

Leaders agreed at the end of the three-day conference on the need for "immediate and substantial" emission cuts by 2020, based on the best science available, followed by cuts of "at least half of 1990 levels by 2050."

"We believe that working to reduce emissions now is less costly than delaying our efforts. There is nothing to be gained through delay," the statement concluded. "The deepest reductions should initially be made by developed economies though global emissions reduction will require all nations to play a part."

They also said a new treaty must protect forests better because a big part of any carbon cuts required by 2020 will come from trees absorbing carbon.

The statement was delivered to Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen and U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer.

"Your words are sweet music in my ears," Loekke Rasmussen told participants. "Developed countries must lead the way by committing to reduce at least 80 percent by 2050."

He was referring to goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent from 1990 levels by 2050.

Energy prices will inevitably rise "to some extent," Loekke Rasmussen added. "We have to be honest. Changing the current economy into a green economy will involve challenges, but also possibilities."

Higher gas and other energy prices could be major factor at a time of a global financial crisis. But the strong consensus among 500 business leaders was that governments should use a cap-and-trade mechanism to set a market price on carbon, rather than imposing a tax.

The conference discussed ways to force consumers to pay for the true environmental costs of things by setting up a globally accepted carbon market - far larger than some that now exist. Its function would be to artificially limit emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and other major industrial gases that scientists say are contributing to rising sea levels, melting glaciers and severe droughts.

If governments agree to set new limits to make carbon dioxide a scarcer commodity, CEOs said, their companies can lead the way to a greener economy by getting permits that divvy up how much pollution they can emit or let them sell any unused portions.

"We're going to have to fundamentally redefine our business models in a low-carbon world," said James Rogers, chairman of U.S.-based electricity provider Duke Energy Corp. "Every business has to look inward and figure that out."

But Rogers advised that much of the "happy talk" that marked this conference will have to give way to hard negotiations on the exact measures that should be used to set a fair price on carbon.

Some business leaders called setting the price on carbon the "invisible hand" that would drive everything - referring to the phrase economists use to describe how free markets regulate themselves. Others joked that the last thing God might tell people is they got the price wrong on carbon.

If the price of carbon is high enough, others said, that will signal to business to make fast changes, though it is already happening faster even than CEOs understand.

Behind the summit, the major concern was that a treaty must emerge from the United Nations-sponsored summit in Copenhagen in December to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, whose mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases expire in 2012.

The next major round of U.N. climate talks toward a new treaty will begin just days from now in Bonn, Germany. A first draft containing general elements based on nations' submissions already has been prepared.

Yvo de Boer, the U.N.'s climate chief, said a key requirement to reducing greenhouse gases is "significant" and "stable" financing from rich industrialized nations to help developing countries pay for needed changes. But he said he has no doubt a new treaty will be agreed upon in December.

"It must be clear," he said. "No mumbling allowed in Copenhagen."

Environmentalists said the first draft meant serious negotiations had to begin.

"Now that we have it, there is no real excuse for countries to hide their positions anymore," said Swiss-based WWF's Kim Carstensen.

[San Diego Union-Tribune editorial, Saturday, May 23, 2009:](#)

## **Shabby con job**

When will AB 32 finally face honest scrutiny?

When Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and lawmakers worked throughout 2006 to craft AB 32 – the state's landmark legislation targeting the emissions that contribute to global warming – they repeatedly emphasized their intent to implement the new law with as little economic disruption as possible. Critics questioned how this would be possible, given that the law would force consumers and businesses to switch to cleaner but more costly energy sources. Against all logic, however, Schwarzenegger began to argue with increasing fervor that the law would actually help the economy.

Last fall, the governor's fantasy was reinforced by the California Air Resources Board. The board issued an official economic impact study predicting the forced shift to costlier power would have few if any negative effects.

The study was savaged as unprofessional and unusable by independent economists hired to review it and was further discredited by the respected, nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office.

In December, the air board adopted the study with barely a nod to its critics. But with the economy tanking, Republicans and African-American and Latino Democrats recently won full consideration of a bill by Sen. Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga, that would force the air board to actually do a serious, honest study of AB 32's economic costs.

On Wednesday, despite the support of panel Chairman Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, the bill was rejected by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. Why did Democratic Sens. Ellen Corbett, Loni Hancock, Fran Pavley and Alan Lowenthal part ways with Simitian and GOP Sens. George Runner and Roy Ashburn? Reportedly because of the lobbying of the air board, which said Dutton's bill might delay implementation of AB 32.

And implementing the law, you see, is what's most important. Even if the law is deeply flawed. Even if it means going back on endlessly repeated promises about protecting jobs in our transition to a new era of energy regulation. Even if it means adding a crushing, unilateral burden on the state's economy in the midst of the biggest downturn in 70 years.

Way to go, Sacramento. These past few years, you've really been on a roll.

[MediaNews editorial in Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Saturday, May 23, 2009:](#)

## **Editorial: A huge boost for cleaner energy**

The Obama administration's ambitious goal to significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions and wean the nation from dependence on foreign oil is admirable. But there is a wide gap between desire and reality with many alternative energy sources still in the early development stages.

Fortunately, there is a realistic bridge from where the nation is now, with its heavy dependence on oil and coal, to a future with sufficient supplies of green power from biomass, solar, geothermal, wind, tidal and other renewable energy sources. It is natural gas.

Not long ago it appeared that the United States was running out of retrievable natural gas and that we would have to import it from other nations in the form of liquefied natural gas. In fact, port facilities were built to handle such imports.

However, in the last decade, new methods of obtaining natural gas from shale have opened up vast new domestic supplies.

In the last few years, a huge natural gas source was discovered in northern Louisiana. It is big enough to alter the nation's energy situation. The so-called Haynesville Shale discovery is

conservatively estimated to hold 200 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. That equals 33 billion barrels of oil, which is 18 years of current domestic production.

The Louisiana field could be several times that size and it is not the only new discovery. Huge natural gas resources are being discovered in Wyoming, Arkansas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Texas as well.

Industry estimates say the United States has at least 2,200 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that could be recovered with our new technology. That would be enough to meet 100 years of current U.S. natural-gas demand.

Natural gas is a fossil fuel and is not pollution-free. But it produces only half of the carbon dioxide that our cleanest coal-burning power plants create.

The climate-change bill being pushed through Congress now sets tough targets for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide. Replacing coal-burning power plants with natural gas would make a significant contribution to meeting those goals.

Jason Grumet, executive director of the National Commission on Energy Policy and a senior adviser to President Barack Obama during the presidential campaign, said, "The availability of natural-gas generation enables us to be much more courageous in charting a transition to a low-carbon economy."

Not only is natural gas much cleaner than coal or oil, we don't have to import it and we already have the technology to use it, not just in producing electricity but as a fuel for motor vehicles, especially diesel-powered trucks.

The only thing holding back greater production of domestic natural gas is limited demand, not supply. That situation could — and should — change dramatically as natural gas replaces coal and perhaps diesel.

Natural gas is not the final destination in reducing greenhouse gases, oil imports and air pollution. But it is a highly promising intermediary energy source that can in a relative short period of time cut carbon dioxide emissions and dependence on foreign oil.

We are encouraged that the Obama administration agrees.

[S.F. Chronicle commentary, Tuesday, May 26, 2009:](#)

### **Carbon trading's inconvenient truth**

By Patrick McCully

In the face of unwavering Republican opposition, Californian Rep. Henry Waxman last week successfully guided a mammoth energy and climate bill through the House Energy and Commerce Committee that he chairs. This should be a thrilling moment for environmentalists. Nineteen years after the U.N.'s panel of scientists first reached consensus on the threat posed by global warming, the United States, for long the world's biggest polluter, is finally poised to take action. But unfortunately, the feeling among many climate-change campaigners is more of dashed hopes than delight. The good news, however, also comes from California in the form of AB1404. If Washington would follow the lead of this bill, it could close a gaping loophole in the proposed federal legislation.

Mainly to get the votes of coal-state Democrats, the federal bill, co-authored by Waxman and Ed Markey, D-Mass., includes hundreds of billions of dollars in giveaways to the coal industry and sets targets for renewable energy that are weaker than one could expect without the bill. The most serious is a medium-term cut in pollution that is only 4 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 - is weak compared with the 25 to 40 percent that scientists say we must achieve to have a decent chance of avoiding climate chaos.

Even this scarily inadequate target is illusory because the supposed pollution "cap" in the bill would be blown to pieces by allowing polluters to buy cheap "carbon offsets" or "carbon credits" instead of reducing their emissions.

The bill's offsets component (and similar "cap-and-trade" schemes being designed for California, and the Western United States) is modeled after the world's largest carbon credit system, the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism. The Kyoto mechanism has allowed polluters in Europe and Japan to avoid cutting their own emissions by buying offsets from project developers elsewhere, mainly in China and India. Many of the Waxman-Markey credits are likely to come from the this or whatever global offsetting scheme replaces it after Kyoto expires in 2012. After a decade of closely monitoring the mechanism, I have found it to be at best expensive and ineffective in combatting climate change, and at worst, to have aided increased carbon emissions.

Projects that earn credits must document that they would not be feasible without the income from selling the credits. Further, to quantify how many credits a project is allowed to sell, evaluators must determine how much greenhouse gas would have been emitted if the project were not built. One English journalist described offset credits as "an imaginary commodity created by deducting what you hope happens from what you guess would have happened."

This dependence on guesswork makes it easy for developers and consultants to scam the CDM. As a result, all sorts of projects with dubious claims to climate-friendly attributes have been approved. David Victor, director of Stanford's Energy and Sustainable Development Program, believes that up to two-thirds of these offsets do not represent genuine emission cuts.

The Waxman-Markey bill would allow the use of up to 2 billion offsets each year, up to three-quarters of them from international sources. The use of these offsets would allow U.S. polluters to boost emissions by nearly two-fifths by 2012 and would not force cutbacks below today's levels until 2027.

Assembly members Kevin de León, D-Los Angeles, and Manuel Pérez, D-Coachella, have introduced bill AB1404 in the state Assembly, which would limit the use of offsets within California's climate action plan 10 percent of reductions from market mechanisms, would prioritize offsets that provide environmental and health benefits within the state, and would prohibit use of offsets from the Kyoto mechanism.

AB1404 can help speed the urgently needed transformation to a prosperous, clean and climate-friendly economy - and send a message to Washington that dealing with climate change requires emissions cuts, not accounting tricks.

*Patrick McCully is the executive director of International Rivers, a Berkeley-based human rights and environmental advocacy group.*

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, May 23, 2009](#)

### **Emissions down but costs up**

Re "Don't miss chance for rapid action on global warming" (Viewpoints, May 19): Paul Krugman endorses the bill written by far-left zealots Henry Waxman and Edward Markey, called the American Clean Energy and Security Act. It mandates reducing U.S. emissions by 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, which the Heritage Foundation says would increase every American household's energy costs by over \$2,000 per year.

But higher energy prices are President Barack Obama's goal. Typical leftist that he is, Obama is always ordering the rest of us to sacrifice.

Tony Rohl, Grass Valley

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sat., May 23, 2009:](#)

## **Time to abandon oil**

The time is here. No more putting off what is a vital issue with global warming and the automobiles.

Imagine, since Henry Ford started the assembly lines with the Ford Model "T" using gas as the motivator to make them move. Now more than 100 years later, we are still using gas. What a trade-off. We have changed the world with wars just to keep using oil.

Now it's time. No more Republican Party to stop us from asking for higher mileage cars and electric cars. No time left. Let's do what is right.

*George Madrid, Orosi*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the state of California finances new studies regarding the health impacts on residents that live 50 yards away from major roadways. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

## **Financia California nuevos estudios sobre daño a la salud de quienes viven cerca de carreteras**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, May 25, 2009

El Laboratorio para Efectos de Contaminación del Aire en la Salud, de la Universidad de California en Irvine, informó que iniciará un nuevo estudio para determinar el daño que ocasionan las llamadas partículas ultra finas de la contaminación vehicular en personas que viven a unas 50 yardas de las carreteras.

El impacto de la contaminación, principalmente por el consumo de diesel, en la salud de residentes cercanos a las autopistas puede ser hasta diez veces más dañino que el que eventualmente llegara a sufrir una persona que reside lejos de las carreteras, dijo el director del análisis, Michael Kleinman.

Un estudio anterior, también de la Universidad de California en Irvine determinó que los niños que crecían cerca de las carreteras tenían menor capacidad pulmonar al llegar a la vida adulta.

Ahora se buscan vínculos, por ejemplo entre el asma y la arteriosclerosis.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses in addition to making laws stricter, a call has been made to educate about global warming.](#)

## **Además de endurecer leyes, llaman a educar sobre calentamiento global**

Nancy González

El Diario de El Paso, Tuesday, May 26, 2009

El Paso—La iniciativa de Ley propuesta por el presidente Barack Obama con la que se pretende dictar acciones que disminuyan las emisiones que causan el calentamiento global debe ser acompañada con programas educativos e incentivos para que tenga un impacto positivo y cumpla su objetivo, señalaron grupos medioambientalistas en esta frontera.

"Las comunidades pobres, como esta frontera, son las principales contribuidoras al calentamiento global ya que los contaminantes y desechos de otras áreas terminan aquí y las personas, por más educadas que sean, desconocen qué es el calentamiento global y sus efectos", dijo Mariana Chew, integrante del grupo Sierra Club.

Señaló que la principal fuente de emisiones en esta frontera son los automóviles y que sería prudente que los gobiernos establecieran incentivos fiscales a las personas que mantienen en óptimas condiciones sus vehículos.

“Todos tratamos de que nuestro automóvil pase la verificación pero, si se diera algún incentivo, le haríamos reparaciones para que emitiera aún menos y su funcionamiento fuera óptimo. Esto ayudaría aún más”, agregó.

La Ley de Cambio Climático propuesta por el presidente Obama contempla disminuir las emisiones al medio ambiente en un 17 por ciento para el año 2020.

De acuerdo con especialistas, el cambio climático es una acción que consiste en la modificación del clima con respecto a una escala global o regional que es provocada por causas naturales o acciones del ser humano que impactan la concentración de gases en la atmósfera.

Este fenómeno se manifiesta por medio de cambios climáticos drásticos tales como prolongadas sequías, lluvias torrenciales y temperaturas extremas.

La elevación de 0.6 grados centígrados en la temperatura de la Tierra está íntimamente ligada con la gran acumulación de CO<sub>2</sub> y otros gases del efecto invernadero por lo que no se descarta que en años futuros esta cifra se incremente.

Chew indicó que, aunado a esta Ley, es necesario un cambio en la conciencia a fin de modificar hábitos y costumbres que ocasionan emisiones contaminantes.

Daniel Chacón Anaya, administrador de la Comisión de Cooperación Ecológica Fronteriza (COCEF), señaló que es indispensable educar a la población desde los primeros años de vida escolar para reducir los gases del efecto invernadero.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the investment in green energy will create jobs in the US.](#)

## **La inversión en energía verde crearía empleos en EEUU**

EFE |

La Opinión, Monday, May 25, 2009

COPENHAGUE, Dinamarca (EFE).- Inversiones en fuentes de energía renovables o bajas en emisión de carbono permitirían crear 3 millones de puestos de trabajo en 2025 sólo en Estados Unidos, según un informe del Consejo Climático de Copenhague presentado hoy en la Cumbre Empresarial Mundial sobre Cambio Climático.

Más de 2 millones de empleos podrían crearse en EEUU en 2025 combinando una producción energética en la que una cuarta parte procediera de fuentes renovables y un crecimiento anual de la producción eléctrica del 0,5 por ciento.

Un aumento de las fuentes de energía bajas en emisión de carbono elevaría esa cifra hasta los 3 millones, según el informe.

En este último supuesto el 90 por ciento de la electricidad total suministrada en Estados Unidos procedería o de energías renovables o bajas en emisión de carbono.

El estudio señala que invertir en energías renovables y adoptar medidas eficientes desde el punto de vista energético podría generar de 2 a 8 veces más trabajos por unidad de energía suministrada que el sector basado en combustibles fósiles.

El informe se basa en un modelo desarrollado por el Laboratorio de Energía Renovable de la estadounidense Universidad de California en Berkeley a partir del caso del consorcio eólico danés Vestas Wind Systems.

"Este estudio ilustra de forma dramática el crecimiento y la capacidad real de crear puestos de trabajo de la energía verde no en el futuro, sino ahora. ¿Por qué no reemplazar la deuda externa en energía por inversiones en una fuerza de trabajo entrenada e innovadora", destacó Daniel M. Kammen, codirector del Instituto de Berkeley de Medio Ambiente.

El sector público debe jugar además un papel central para "descarbonizar" el suministro de electricidad y apostar por una vía sostenible, según el informe.

El Consejo Climático de Copenhague es un organismo creado en 2007 con vistas a la cumbre mundial del clima que se celebrará en diciembre en Copenhague y que ha organizado desde hoy y hasta este martes una conferencia que reúne a más de 800 líderes empresariales, expertos, políticos y representantes de ONG en la capital danesa.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the project for clean energy in the US is approved.](#)

### **Aprueban proyecto de ley sobre energía limpia en EEUU**

La Opinión, Monday, May 25, 2009

WASHINGTON (EFE).- El Comité de Energía y Comercio de la Cámara de Representantes de EEUU aprobó hoy un proyecto de ley sobre energía concebido para reducir los gases invernadero a través de la aplicación de límites a la emisión de contaminantes.

La aprobación por 33 votos a favor y 25 en contra fue aplaudida por el presidente Barack Obama, quien afirmó que es un paso más en el cumplimiento de la promesa de crear una economía de energía limpia.

El proyecto de energía limpia, que provendrá principalmente de fuentes renovables como energía solar, eólica y termal, reducirá la dependencia de EEUU del petróleo extranjero, aplicará medidas contra los contaminantes y creará millones de nuevos empleos, indicó.

"Es histórico por lo que logra al proporcionar incentivos a la energía limpia que alienten la innovación y al mismo tiempo reconozcan las preocupaciones de las industrias y regiones del país", agregó Obama en una declaración.

La iniciativa busca reducir las emisiones contaminantes de plantas energéticas, refinerías y del sector del transporte y obligaría a algunas industrias a pagar permisos especiales para su operación.

Pero, la propuesta ha sido criticada por el sector empresarial, incluyendo el de servicios públicos, la siderurgia, la industria automotor y las refinerías, que señalan que esos permisos deben ser gratuitos.

Alegan que pagarlos constituiría un duro golpe financiero para ellas en un momento de debilidad general de la economía.

En una aparente concesión ante esas presiones, el comité acordó reducir los objetivos de disminución de las emisiones contaminantes.

En vez de ser de 20 por ciento con respecto a los niveles de 2005 para 2020 como ha propuesto el gobierno, los miembros del comité acordaron que sea de 17 por ciento.

El proyecto aprobado en el comité también reduciría las emisiones en un 42 por ciento para 2030 y de 83 por ciento para 2050.

Pero, la concesión fue criticada por grupos ecologistas como Greenpeace y Amigos de la Tierra que señalaron tras la aprobación que constituyó un triunfo de la política sobre la ciencia y de la influencia industrial sobre el interés público.

La iniciativa deberá ser aprobada por el pleno de la Cámara y por el Senado antes de ser enviada al presidente Obama para su promulgación.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses less costs, more energy. Program helps with the retrofitting of equipment in favor of the environment.](#)

### **Menos gasto, más energía**

**Programa ayuda con la renovación de equipos a favor del medio ambiente**

Yolanda Arenales

La Opinión, Saturday, May 23, 2009

A menos ingresos, más inversión, sobre todo si es para ayudar a reducir las facturas mensuales. Esa es la lógica que ha seguido la empresaria Sylvia Márquez, de Marquez & Marquez Food, una fabricante de tostadas en South Gate.

Como muchos otros propietarios de negocio, Márquez está sufriendo los efectos de la crisis, pero lucha para mantener a flote su compañía y los 140 trabajadores que operan en la misma.

"Por eso tiene sentido invertir en equipo que va a gastar menos energía", dice Márquez, quien ahora puede cocinar dos mil libras de maíz en unos 10-15 minutos en lugar de los 40 a 50 que le tomaba antes cocinar la mitad de esta cantidad. Eso le ayudará a bajar la factura mensual de gas a unos 25 mil dólares en lugar de los 35 o 40 mil que pagaba con el equipo antiguo.

De los 120 mil dólares invertidos, la empresaria ha recuperado ya 25 mil, gracias al programa de reembolsos de The Gas Company, que sufraga parte de los gastos de renovación de equipos cuando se cambian por otros energéticamente más eficientes.

La compañía anunció esta semana que cuenta con un presupuesto de más de 20 millones para reembolsos e incentivos a dueños de negocios que cumplan con los requisitos de sus programas de ayuda para equipos de consumo eficiente, la cifra más alta dedicada a este fin en toda la historia de la compañía.

"Este mayor nivel de fondos va a beneficiar no sólo al medioambiente, sino que ayudará a los empresarios a enfrentarse a la economía actual", dice Mark Gaines, director de programas de negocios para dicha compañía de suministro energético.

En 2008 los reembolsos e incentivos para negocios en el sur de California, totalizaron 14 millones de dólares, el doble que en el año 2007.

Además, The Gas Company ofrece préstamos a cero interés, para la renovación de equipo. El pago se hace junto con la factura del gas, y según informan en la compañía, a pesar del difícil entorno financiero actual, una gran parte de las solicitudes son aprobadas debido a que el dinero proviene de The Gas Company sin mediación de ningún banco.

"El año pasado me ahorré 20 mil dólares sin necesidad de invertir un centavo", dice Yusheng Xu, presidente de Tri Heat Treating Company, en Pomona, quien consiguió un préstamo sin interés —ni puntos o tasas— para renovar su equipo.

Negocios grandes y pequeños se están beneficiando de estos programas.

"Gran parte de nuestros 170 establecimientos han recibido incentivos", dice Dan Milojevich, de El Pollo Loco, señalando que los mismos recibieron unos 12 mil dólares en 2008, y esperan conseguir una cantidad equivalente este año, mediante la renovación de calentadores de agua, freidoras y otros elementos de su equipo.

Más información:

1 (800) GAS-2000

1 (800) 508-2348

[socalgas.com/energyefficiency](http://socalgas.com/energyefficiency)

Interés, tasas, y puntos: 0

Préstamos para instalación de equipos energéticamente eficiente:

\* Cantidades : Entre \$5,000 y \$100,000 para negocios.

\* Programa de reembolsos 'Eficiencia Express': Hasta 200 mil dólares anuales en reembolsos por la instalación de equipo energéticamente eficiente, comprado e instalado entre el 1 de enero y el 31 diciembre 2009.

\* Programa de Eficiencia energética para negocios: Hasta un máximo de 1 millón de dólares por proyecto y 2 millones por establecimiento/año.