

Government roundup: Bill would repeal \$29 million air pollution fine

Bakersfield Californian, Thurs., April 20, 2011

Congressman Kevin McCarthy announced Tuesday he's introduced a bill that would repeal a controversial fine imposed on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for failing to meet a tough clean air rule.

The Commonsense Ozone Regulation Act would rescind the \$29 million fine, which the district decided to pay by tacking an additional \$12 onto the annual cost of registering a motor vehicle in the valley. The legislation also would postpone implementation of new, stricter ozone standards until a Local Advisory Committee can study the feasibility of complying.

The bill is cosponsored by Reps. Devin Nunes, R-Visalia, Jeff Denham, R-Mariposa, and Darrell Issa, R-Vista.

"Right now, EPA is fining valley residents for an air standard it already revoked, and now, is set to impose new standards that will result in a de facto ban on new businesses in the valley," McCarthy, R-Bakersfield, said in a news release.

"My bill allows Central Valley residents to inject commonsense into one-size-fits-all Washington regulations that destroy jobs and penalize our communities for circumstances beyond our control."

McCarthy noted that the valley is being fined for failing to comply with an ozone standard EPA revoked in 2005. The valley is working to comply with a new standard. EPA has proposed an even more difficult-to-attain rule.

"Once again, extreme environmental regulations are impeding economic growth in the Central Valley," Denham said in the news release.

McCarthy said EPA's current and proposed ozone standards fail to take into account the valley's topography, weather, natural occurring ozone levels, foreign sources of pollution and traffic traveling through the region – things the valley can't control.

The Local Advisory Committee he proposes would include a representative of the local agriculture community, air pollution control board, energy industry, health care industry, manufacturing and processing industry, and transportation industry, as well as a local government and environmental justice representative.

The committee would have five years to study and report findings to Congress. Congress would then have six months to review the report and act.

During this time, EPA would not be able to implement new 8-hour ozone standards, but the valley would still be subject to the current 8-hour ozone standard.

Tulare to accept award for green energy policy

The Business Journal, Tues., April 19, 2011

The City of Tulare will get an award April 19 for its efforts to reduce energy consumption and cut down on harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Tulare is just one of several municipalities that will be honored April 19 during the 2011 Green California Summit and Exposition in Sacramento.

The Climate Change Award goes to Tulare for its Energy Efficiency Strategy, an initiative that includes a variety of programs to reduce greenhouse gases.

That initiative takes into account four bio-gas fuel cells in Tulare's fuel cell plant, creating 1.2 megawatts of energy daily. Alternative fuels are used in the city's fleets, and Tulare has retrofitted all of its facilities with energy efficient upgrades.

Next, the city plans on retrofitting its streetlights and building a 1 megawatt solar project at its wastewater treatment plant.

Other awards to be presented at the ceremony include the Energy Innovation Award going to the California Department of General Services, the Waste Management Award to Santa Cruz County and the Green Building Award to the City of Sacramento.