

Bad air rises to top of concerns

Issue shifts from a quality of life matter to a more immediate threat, survey chief says.

By John Ellis

The Fresno Bee

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Residents of the Central Valley's southern reaches, a swath of land stretching from Chowchilla to the Grapevine, say pollution in general and air pollution in particular are the most important issues facing the region.

They said the same thing last year. They expect it will be the same in 2025.

The findings, from a special survey of the Central Valley conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, reflect a growing concern among Valley residents about the state of the region's air.

It's a concern spreading up and down the entire Central Valley. The survey found that 41% of respondents in the 19-county heartland of California say air pollution is a big problem.

In a March survey conducted by the PPIC in Los Angeles County -- long considered the prime example of a place with bad air -- 37% of respondents said it is a big problem.

The fact that more Central Valley residents are highly concerned about air pollution than their Los Angeles County counterparts was not lost on PPIC researchers.

"The message is getting out that air pollution is a significant problem," said Mark Baldassare, statewide survey director for the PPIC. "It's moved from the kind of issue that is quality of life to a more immediate threat or concern to people."

The survey, co-sponsored by the Great Valley Center and The Fresno, Sacramento and Modesto Bees, questioned 2,000 adults between April 10-21 in a 19-county area between Redding and Bakersfield. The margin of error is 2 percentage points.

In Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties, 72% of those respondents said air pollution was either a very serious or somewhat serious threat, and 39% said either they, someone in their immediate family, or both, suffer from asthma or respiratory problems.

"We can only put so many people on the Earth," said Fresno resident Kevin O'Neal, 22, a survey participant who is a supervisor for a security company.

"Everyone is driving a car, and that is damaging the Earth. I'm not sure how long it can last."

Visalia resident Frank Martorana, 27, moved here two decades ago from the East Coast. He has asthma problems on both sides of his family. If the air conditions become too bad for his three children, he said, he would consider moving.

"My kids are young still," he said, "so it is of concern what the future holds."

Survey respondents were more divided when asked whether they supported tougher government regulations, even if they would hurt the economy. Across the entire Central Valley, 39% said they would support tougher regulations even if they damaged the economy, while 27% said they wouldn't. Another 27% said they would back tougher regulations only if they didn't hurt the economy.

Carol Whiteside, president of the Great Valley Center, noted that the Central Valley must address the pollution problem or the economy will suffer -- added regulations or not.

"We will make or break our well-being by how well we [handle the pollution problem]," she said. "Having the problem is one thing. Not dealing with it is a far greater indictment."

By taking steps to correct the pollution problem, Whiteside said, people will be "attracted to the collective resolve of the region. If we blow it off, it will show we don't have the capacity to solve our own problems, and that would be a tragedy."

Baldassare said the Valley's struggling economy makes the challenge that much greater.

Where Central Valley residents do appear to be willing to sacrifice is in public transportation and driving more fuel-efficient vehicles.

Asked whether they would be willing to take public transportation more frequently to reduce air pollution, 51% said yes. Asked whether they would be willing to drive a more fuel-efficient car to help the air, 79% said yes.

O'Neal was split on the questions.

Asked about public transportation, he said: "I don't want to sound selfish, but ..." He then said it would add two hours of commute time to his workday, and he didn't really want to do that.

As for a hybrid car, O'Neal gave a definite yes. He even said he would sacrifice other parts of his life to afford such a vehicle.

In other findings for Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties:
67% of Valley residents said they would support a ballot measure in their county to increase the local sales tax for transportation.
55% supported encouraging conservation as a way to meet future water needs, with 35% supporting building new dams and reservoirs.
49% said population growth in the Valley is a "bad thing," while 16% said it was a "good thing" and 31% said it made no difference.
62% said new housing should be constructed in already developed areas to preserve open space, while 30% said there should be building in undeveloped areas to provide more suburban-style communities.

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Air concerns Valley residents, poll finds

By Doug Mattson
Special to The Stockton Record
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Central Valley residents are worried about air pollution but are lukewarm about imposing government rules that would clean the air, according to a survey released today by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The survey found that Valley residents are more concerned about air pollution than are Los Angeles County residents. Most -- including more than three-quarters of the sport utility vehicle owners surveyed -- say they would be willing to drive smaller, more fuel-efficient cars or switch to public transportation, but many are unwilling to accept tougher, air-cleaning government regulations.

Stuart Rigdon, a Stockton bookkeeper, won't part with the Ford F-150 extended cab he gassed up Tuesday afternoon.

"Drive anything smaller, and you're down on the ground," he said at the 76 station at Lafayette and Center streets.

Yet smaller, low-emission cars are easier on the Central Valley's increasingly dirty, harmful air, Rigdon recognizes. He also notices a lot of older cars with spewing tailpipes.

"What I would be willing to do," he said, "is move out of the county."

Josette Merced Bello isn't surprised. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokeswoman encountered residents' mixed feelings on air pollution while working on a proposal to regulate wood-burning in home fireplaces.

The public clamored for cleaner air, Merced Bello said. Then came the backlash. "We got many comments that said, 'No, no, no. Not with me. you need to be more strict with business and industry.' "

The Public Policy Institute suggests the survey results reflect widespread problems with asthma and other lung diseases in the Valley. Nearly four in 10 Central Valley residents say they or a family member suffer from respiratory problems.

And those in the most polluted areas with the highest rates of disease are most pessimistic about whether the air will get any cleaner over the next 22 years.

In fact, northern and southern San Joaquin Valley residents split over the importance they expect Central Valley air pollution to have in 2025. Overall, 22 percent expected population growth to be the top issue in 2025, while 16 percent believe air pollution will be the biggest issue. But almost twice as many residents in the heavily polluted southern Valley expect air pollution to have top billing in 2025.

Twenty-three percent of residents in the southern San Joaquin Valley counties of Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern say air pollution will be the top concern, compared with 12 percent of respondents in the northern San Joaquin Valley counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced.

Air pollution is generally more severe in the southern part of the Valley because dirty air gets trapped there. Air in the Stockton area, in contrast, is cleared with the help of breezes blowing in through the Carquinez Strait.

Across the Central Valley, 41 percent of residents considered air pollution a "big problem." In an earlier poll of Los Angeles residents, it was 37 percent.

"I would certainly understand why people in the Valley have chosen that," said Chuck Santa'Agata, president and chief executive officer of the American Lung Association of Central California. "You don't need a survey to understand that. You just need to breathe the air to find out."

The survey findings were based on a phone survey of 2,000 adults in the 19-county Central Valley region from April 10 to April 21. The survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 2 percent.

S.J. ridership rises aboard Amtrak

Gas prices help boost trains' numbers

By Audrey Cooper

Stockton Record Staff Writer

Published Wednesday, April 30, 2003

High gasoline prices have helped push more San Joaquin Valley residents away from their cars and into trains, according to new numbers from Amtrak.

Ridership on the San Joaquin lines has hit record levels since the beginning of the year, and the number of passengers on all other Amtrak trains in California also has increased.

Nearly 180,000 one-way trips were taken on the San Joaquin lines from January through March of this year. That's a 12.7 percent increase over the same time last year.

The San Joaquin lines include four daily round-trip trains between Bakersfield and Oakland, and two round-trip trains between Bakersfield and Sacramento.

Overall, the number of passengers on California's three Amtrak lines was up 18.5 percent from October to March.

Amtrak officials say high gasoline prices are only a part of the reason for the jump. Marketing efforts such as the wintertime buy-one, get-one-free promotion also went a long way toward increasing the number of tickets sold, spokeswoman Sarah Swain said.

But some transportation advocates are unsure.

"Some of Amtrak's marketing promotions are the best-kept secret around. This increase is much more due to gas prices," said Ken Gosting with the Northern California-based group Transportation Involves Everyone.

Gosting said high gasoline prices particularly affect poorer Central Valley communities along the San Joaquin line.

"People in the Valley without as much disposable income do look at the values in terms of whether they should get on alternative transportation," he said.

Samme and Ashton Walker agreed Tuesday that high gasoline prices along with traffic congestion make train travel easier.

The mother-daughter duo rides the trains from Stockton, where Samme lives, to Antioch, home of 16-year-old Ashton.

They said they've seen a dramatic increase in the number of people taking the train since the beginning of the year.

"It's definitely gas prices," Samme Walker said. "I know that it would cost us a lot more to drive, plus it would take longer."

The trip takes just 30 minutes and costs just over \$2 each way.

The Stockton Amtrak station on San Joaquin Street is the third-busiest station on the San Joaquin line, with 182,632 travelers coming into or leaving the station in 2002. That's roughly 500 travelers a day.

The Lodi station, which opened just a year ago, is the least-busiest station, with just 4,379 passengers -- an average of about 12 travelers a day.

The Stockton station that also serves the Altamont Commuter Express saw 8,767 riders in 2002. That's a 159 percent increase over the past year.

For more information about Amtrak's services, go to www.amtrak.com.

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Poll: Air worries on rise

By VIC POLLARD, Californian Sacramento Bureau
The Bakersfield Californian
e-mail: vpollard@bakersfield.com
Tuesday April 29, 2003, 11:15:15 PM

SACRAMENTO -- Air pollution and growth issues are beginning to worry Central Valley residents as much or more than they do people in Los Angeles, a new poll released today confirms.

They also think the valley's economy is deteriorating.

But that doesn't mean valley residents aren't happy with the region as a place to live.

The poll is an annual update of a survey taken by two think tanks, the California Public Policy Institute and the Great Valley Center. It contacted 2,000 adults from April 10 to April 21 in the 19-county Central Valley area from Kern County north to Shasta County.

Overall, 75 percent of the region's residents said air pollution is a problem. Of that group, 41 percent said it is a big problem and 34 percent said it was somewhat of a problem.

That marks the first time that valley residents have registered a higher concern about air quality than those in Los Angeles, said Mark Baldassare, the policy institute's survey director. He noted that in a survey the previous month, 37 percent of Los Angeles County residents said air pollution was a big problem in their area.

"The fact that Central Valley residents are more concerned about air pollution than people in L.A. County, the bad-air poster child for so many years, is pretty stunning," Baldassare said. "But this problem is hitting home very directly for many valley residents."

The concern was markedly higher in the southern end of the valley, where Kern County is located and where the highest levels of air pollution are consistently recorded.

Baldassare said the rising concern apparently is driven by worry about the health effects of smog. Some 67 percent said the health threat posed by air pollution is very serious or somewhat serious in their part of the valley. And 37 percent said they or someone in their family suffers from asthma or other respiratory problems.

When it comes to acting on their concerns, 51 percent said they would be willing to take public transit more often and 79 percent -- including 77 percent of SUV owners -- said they would be willing to drive more fuel-efficient, lower-emission vehicles, even if they preferred bigger gas-guzzlers.

But there's less support for government actions to curb pollution.

Although 59 percent say they favor tougher air pollution regulations for agriculture, support drops to 44 percent if the regulations would increase costs for valley businesses.

Sixty-six percent said they support federal air pollution regulations, but just 39 percent register support if the rules would hurt the local economy.

A Kern County lawmaker who is pushing legislation to crack down on pollution from farms and dairies said the poll supports the need for the bills.

"The fact is," said state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, "that valley residents now recognize air pollution and lung damage as one of the major issues they have to be concerned with."

The poll findings show that there's some gloom about the economy.

Only 35 percent rate the region's economy as excellent or good, a significant drop from 45 percent in 2002.

Nevertheless, 77 percent rate their communities as excellent or good places to live and 58 percent say the valley is headed in the right direction.

"People in the valley are very community-oriented," said Carol Whiteside, president of the Great Valley Center, "but there is a growing awareness of the

regional challenges that require us to build consensus across neighborhoods, cities and counties."

D.A. sues Chevron over MTBE

By VIC POLLARD, Californian Sacramento Bureau

The Bakersfield Californian

e-mail: vpollard@bakersfield.com

Tuesday April 29, 2003, 11:15:57 PM

The Kern County District Attorney's Office sued ChevronTexaco Corp. Tuesday, seeking nearly \$5 million in penalties for secretly dumping water contaminated with a controversial gasoline additive into a west Kern oil field.

The company halted injection of water tainted with MTBE into the oil wells after it was exposed by The Californian a little over a year ago and a regulatory official said it was illegal without prior authorization.

ChevronTexaco spokesman Greg Hardy said the water did not pose any health or environmental hazards because it was being injected deep into oil wells. Hardy also said the firm had tried to negotiate a settlement with the District Attorney's Office "and is very disappointed that they have filed this complaint."

The complaint filed by the White Collar Crime Section of District Attorney Ed Jagels' office charges that the company's actions amounted to an unfair business practice under state law.

Deputy District Attorney John Mitchell charged in the complaint that ChevronTexaco disposed of more than 4 million gallons of tainted water in the Cymric Field near McKittrick between Nov. 7, 2000, and April 1, 2002. The suit seeks \$4.75 million in fines.

The tainted water was trucked in from Cambria, a scenic coastal town near Hearst Castle, about 100 miles northwest of Bakersfield.

It was pumped out of the ground beneath a former Chevron service station, where gasoline containing MTBE had leaked from an underground storage tank. The additive was threatening to contaminate community water wells and a nearby creek and local authorities there ordered the company to clean it up.

MTBE, or methyl tertiary butyl ether, has been added to gasoline in California for years to make it burn cleaner and reduce air pollution from vehicle emissions. But tiny amounts of MTBE cause water to smell and taste bad, and leaks like that in Cambria have polluted many lakes and wells around the state. A suspected carcinogen, it has been ordered phased out of the gasoline supply by Gov. Gray Davis as fast as ethanol or other clean-air additives can be phased in.

Chevron trucked the water to west Kern and added it to water being turned into steam and injected into oil wells to soften the heavy, thick crude oil and make it easier to pump out.

Chevron officials said at the time they did not realize what they were doing was illegal.

"When ChevronTexaco learned that it might not be in compliance with its injection permit it immediately stopped using the water," Hardy said. But the complaint in the suit says the permit for Chevron's steam injection operations from the state's Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources required that "a chemical analysis of the fluid to be injected shall be made and filed with this division whenever the source of injection fluid is changed, or as requested by this office."

The suit also says Chevron expected to save about \$15 million by injecting it into the Kern wells, rather than shipping it to a proper disposal site.

Hal Bopp, the division's Kern County representative, said the company did not notify his office of the new source of fluid, and he learned of it from a Californian reporter.

Chevron soon began trucking the water to a commercial hazardous waste disposal firm in the Los Angeles area.

But for the last four months, Hardy said the company has been hauling it to a licensed wastewater treatment plant operated by the city of Santa Maria, near San Luis Obispo and much closer to Cambria.

He said the company is certain the new method of disposal is legal and safe.

Senate committee approves air bills targeting farms

The Bakersfield Californian

The Associated Press

Tuesday April 29, 2003, 04:35:06 PM

SACRAMENTO (AP) - A package of bills targeting farms and dairies to help clean up the San Joaquin Valley's dirty air has been approved by a state Senate panel.

The Senate Environmental Quality Committee on Monday approved four bills sponsored by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, which include repealing a decades-old air pollution exemption for agriculture, phasing out open field burning and establishing three-mile buffer zones between dairies and cities.

Another bill, SB704, would require most of the fuel for biomass plants come from agriculture in order to be eligible for state subsidies. Florez introduced his four bills to help clean up the air in the valley, which is one of the dirtiest air basins in the nation.

About 25 percent of the smog-forming gases in the valley are generated by farms, according to state air regulator estimates. Cars make up about 40 percent.

Regional air quality regulators also face a 2005 federal deadline to reduce smog in the valley or face sanctions that include millions of dollars in fines, business penalties and the delay of \$2 billion in road-building funds.

Growers say the bills unfairly singles them out.

One bill, SB700, goes "way too far," said Cynthia Cory, a California Farm Bureau lobbyist. "We know we have to be part of the air solution ... but we do not want to be treated more restrictively than other industries."

SB700, co-authored by Senate Environmental Quality Committee Chairman Byron Sher, D-Stanford, would for the first time mandate air regulators to issue pollution permits to dairymen and operators of other animal-feeding operations.

The bill would also require farmers to obtain permits for their diesel-powered engines, such as ones used on irrigation pumps.

However, most committee members weren't convinced by arguments that the \$27 billion agriculture industry cannot withstand stricter pollution laws after hearing testimony from asthmatic children and clean-air lobbyists.

Kevin Hamilton, a spokesman for an organization of asthma victim advocates, said if the current epidemic isn't stopped, it will result in a "crisis that will completely disrupt our ability to provide health services to the people of the valley."

Dairy pollution focus of Senate committee hearing in Shafter

LOCAL DIGEST

The Bakersfield Californian

Tuesday April 29, 2003, 11:15:22 PM

Dairy pollution is the focus of the latest hearing by the Senate Select Committee on Air Quality in the Central Valley, planned Thursday in Shafter.

The committee, chaired by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, has been meeting throughout the San Joaquin Valley to take comment from the public and industry experts on valley smog and potential solutions.

The dairy industry has seen explosive growth in the valley, and emissions from dairy cow waste have become a leading source of smog in the valley.

Witnesses at the hearing will include officials from the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Kern County Planning Department, air quality advocacy groups and dairy farmers.

Thursday's hearing begins at 6 p.m. at the Shafter Veterans Hall, 309 California St. For information, call Florez's Sacramento office at (916) 445-4641.

News briefs from Southern California

The Bakersfield Californian

The Associated Press

Tuesday April 29, 2003, 03:55:09 PM

ONTARIO, Calif. (AP) - The proposed 200 mph magnetic-levitation train from Southern California to Las Vegas got a boost when a federal agency agreed to sponsor environmental studies for a route including a stop at Ontario International Airport.

The 269-mile maglev route proposed by the California-Nevada Super Speed Train Commission and American Magline Group would cost about \$10 billion to build, relying heavily on federal funding.

Construction of the 40-mile section from Las Vegas to Primm, Nev., could begin next year, commission spokesman Tom Bradley Jr. said Monday.

The commission received \$1.5 million from the federal government toward cost of an environmental study and \$650,000 from the San Bernardino Association of Governments, Orange County Transportation Authority and Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, Bradley said.

Promoters of the maglev train said it would reduce congestion at regional airports, particularly John Wayne Airport in Orange County, and ease gridlock on Interstate 15 through the Mojave Desert. The trip from Anaheim to Las Vegas would take 86 minutes.

Living with cows, living with people

Editorial, Visalia-Times Delta

Wednesday, April 30, 2003

Not long ago, cotton was king in the San Joaquin Valley. Now, in Tulare County, milk is, and that has implications both for people who make their living from agriculture as well as those who don't.

Dairy operators here benefit from great climate and relatively cheap and available land. This land has been hospitable to dairies for more than 100 years, when the first dairy farmers moved here from the Midwest. Cows, it should be obvious, are here to stay.

Now that a four-year battle over issuing permits for new or expanded dairies appears to be largely behind them, dairy operators should be able to continue to expand, so long as they meet a list of environmental controls meant to control waste, dust and odor produced by dairy cattle.

The 2002 Tulare County crop report, issued Tuesday by the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, notes that much former cotton land is now growing cattle feed.

Tulare County and Valley agriculture has long been marked by its diversity. While the value of milk produced here exceeded \$1 billion in 2001 and approached that last year, it still represents less than a third of the total dollar value of Tulare County agriculture. No corn-and-soybeans county this.

Still, the power of Tulare County's dairy industry rests not only in the production of milk but the job-creating processing of dairy products, primarily cheese. Processors here and in neighboring counties are creating a steady market for milk.

While the total value of Tulare County's milk production dropped in 2002 from the previous year because the price of milk was down, total milk production was up by more than 6 percent. Tulare county cows produced more a billion gallons of milk last year. Since 1999, Tulare County milk production has increased 29 percent.

Living with cows is different from living with cotton. In some parts of the Valley, the battle lines are up between dairy operators and residents of fancy housing developments, each appearing to be encroaching on the other's turf. A bill in the legislature seeks to set up a three-mile barrier between dairies and existing schools or cities. It's aimed primarily at a local controversy in Bakersfield but would apply throughout the Valley, designed as an anti-air pollution measure.

The more appropriate challenge, for both dairy operators and non-farming residents, is to recognize that living together requires compromise. We can't forget that we live in an agricultural community, one of the greatest in the world. There is much to be proud of in that, and much opportunity to work together to solve problems rather than to create them.

Valley's future divides residents

Modesto Bee, 4/30/03

By SUSAN HERENDEENBEE STAFF WRITER

Most Central Valley residents believe it's a good place to live and work, but air pollution, development and a lack of well-paying jobs make them worry, a new survey says.

And when survey participants from 19 counties were asked to predict the future, 38 percent said the region will be a better place in 2025 and 38 percent said it will be worse.

Mark Baldassare, research director for the Public Policy Institute of California, said telephone interviews this month with 2,000 residents showed mixed feelings in a number of other categories. The results were released today.

"People are sensing more and more that there are problems," he said. "But they're not focused on how they can be part of the solution."

In the Northern San Joaquin Valley -- defined in the survey as Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced counties -- the biggest worries revolve around the changes residential and commercial growth could bring.

About 12 percent of survey respondents said growth and sprawl are the region's biggest issue now, and 25 percent said it will be the biggest issue in 2025.

They said officials should protect farmland by allowing new homes only in developed areas. They also said single-family homes should be built, rather than apartments.

Ed Taczanowsky, executive vice president of the Building Industry Association of Central California, said contractors cannot accommodate all the people who need homes without building on farmland.

He said anti-growth sentiment has caused officials to slow construction and left the state unable to reduce a housing shortage.

"Growth is going to be, and already is, extremely controlled and tightly planned," he said. "In the last two years, it has become extremely difficult to produce single-family homes."

The Central Valley's population is expected to increase from 5.7 million now to 9.3 million in 2025, according to projections from the California Department of Finance.

Marion Elliott, a retired school principal who stepped down from 16 years on the Manteca Planning Commission in December, said he is optimistic about the future.

He said homes should be built in existing neighborhoods and in the foothills where crops don't grow as easily.

"You can't stop growth, but you can control it," Elliott said.

On the other side is Diana Westmoreland Pedrozo of Merced, a field representative for the American Farmland Trust, who said the region cannot support all the commuters who have moved to the valley.

"We should be looking at our land here in the valley as a national treasure," she said. "Once we pave it over, it's gone."

Deep divide over schools

Jobs and pollution were right behind growth as concerns throughout the valley. Sixteen percent of the people surveyed rated pollution as their top concern for the future, while 9 percent worry most about jobs and the economy. In the Northern San Joaquin Valley, growth and pollution remained the top two concerns, but crime tied with the economy in the third slot. When it comes to taxes, respondents also are split.

About 56 percent of the people polled said the state should make education its top funding priority, but 53 percent said they would not want to raise local taxes to provide more money to schools.

Meanwhile, 55 percent of respondents said they would be willing to raise the sales tax 1 percent to provide more money for police, parks, roads, libraries and other services.

Distrust of government is strong, with 73 percent of respondents saying voters should settle important decisions at the ballot box and only 24 percent saying elected officials should decide.

Carol Whiteside is president of the Modesto-based Great Valley Center, which promotes the region. She said lawmakers are eyed suspiciously when policy matters are too complicated to condense into a slogan.

She also said cities and counties must work together to raise awareness, gain political clout in Sacramento and solve problems that cross government boundaries.

"Everybody rises or falls together," she said.

Although the survey points to a number of problems, it also shows that 77 percent of residents think the community they live in is a good or excellent place.

"People generally do like living in the valley," Whiteside said. "And people who don't live in the valley don't understand that."

The Public Policy Institute of California's Special Survey of the Central Valley can be found at www.ppic.org/main/home.asp <<http://www.ppic.org/main/home.asp>>.

'Sickening' editorial

Fresno Bee Letter to the Editor

By Floyd A. Matthews

Fresno

(Published Wednesday, April 30, 2003, 5:15 AM)

Your attempt to smear Fresno City Council Member Jerry Duncan in your editorial April 23 was sickening. I am 80 years old and have watched the deterioration of patriotism in this great country for years.

Jerry Duncan should be commended for taking this stand. You seem to minimize the importance of patriotism and cite other problems as being more important, such as unemployment and clean air. This seems to imply a patriotic person isn't capable of attempting to solve these problems while exhibiting his love for his country. How ridiculous.

Any government official who objects to [ordering the Pledge of Allegiance to be said at all meetings of city bodies] doesn't deserve to be in office, and I encourage the voters to remember the names of those who were in opposition.

Media 'pounding'

Fresno Bee Letter to the Editor

By R.L. Finderup

Fresno

(Published Wednesday, April 30, 2003, 5:15 AM)

The Bee recently ran a letter from a person saying he "got sick recently just driving back into the filthy air of the Valley."

Due to an active spring weather pattern, the Valley's air recently has been quite good.

I would guess that any recent sickness attributed to the Valley's air has more to do with the constant, unrelenting pounding by the media that we are all going to die by breathing the so-called "filthy air of the Valley."