U.S. denial of California emissions waiver criticized

Sen. Boxer, chairman of a Senate environment panel, says she might subpoena documents concerning possible White House interference.

By Margot Roosevelt, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, Friday, January 11, 2008

Congressional critics launched an offensive against the Bush administration Thursday for denying California and other states the right to adopt strict curbs on greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks.

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said she would consider issuing a subpoena for documents that might show White House interference in the Dec. 19 decision to deny California a waiver to enact its own rules under the Clean Air Act.

"This outrageous decision . . . is completely contrary to the law and science," Boxer said in a briefing with state officials at Los Angeles City Hall. She held up an empty cardboard box as a symbol of the Environmental Protection Agency's refusal so far to provide the hefty technical and legal backup that normally accompanies air pollution waiver decisions and are usually published in the Federal Register.

The EPA's decision was in part based on the assertion that global warming, caused by carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, is a worldwide problem rather than a California issue, and therefore requires a national, rather than a state-led, solution. EPA administrator Stephen L. Johnson said an energy bill signed by President Bush last month would adequately control greenhouse gas emissions by requiring a 35-mph fleet-wide fuel economy average by 2020.

But the air board has calculated that more greenhouse gas would be emitted under the federal plan than under California's blueprint.

California already has the nation's most severe smog and soot. And scientists have found that by warming the air and increasing humidity, carbon dioxide emissions increase concentrations of ozone and fine particulates, which are linked to heart attacks, asthma and other diseases. A Stanford University study released last week calculated that California would have several hundred additional deaths each year due to the effects of global warming.

Using a computer model to simulate global pollution changes and factoring in the health effects confirmed by previous studies, Mark Jacobson, a Stanford professor of civil and environmental engineering, concluded that about 21,600 people worldwide could die each year for each degree Celsius of temperature increase.

"With six of the 10 most polluted cities in the nation being in California," Jacobson said, "that alone creates a special circumstance for the state."

California's landmark 2002 law requires new automakers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle tailpipes by 30% by 2016. Under the Clean Air Act, the state is allowed to issue its own rules, because it had a pollution program before the act was passed.

States may choose to follow the federal model or California's rules, but only if the EPA issues a waiver to California. The agency has done so in more than 50 other cases over three decades

California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown, who sued the EPA last week in an effort to overturn the decision, said the agency was delaying the issuing of legal and technical documents to stall court action.

"Subpoena these guys," he urged Boxer. "Send the marshals out. Get them to tell us under oath. They are not going to get away with this. Sooner or later, we are going to uncover real corruption . . . that is dangerous to California and to the whole world."

Brown said that the Bush administration may be able to delay court action a year, until the president's term is over, but that Congress may be able to speed the process. "What you have is a bunch of scofflaws in the White House," he said. "This fellow Johnson is becoming a stooge in a really pathetic drama that hopefully will not play out much longer."

Johnson is scheduled to testify before the Senate committee in Washington on Jan. 24. An EPA spokesman said, "The official decision documents are being prepared, and they will be released soon."

Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the state Air Resources Board, said that if the court did not act quickly, the board would outline other options for requiring greenhouse gas cutbacks from automobiles, including fees and incentives. She said the California standards, which are scheduled to begin to take effect in 2009, could be met by auto companies with existing technology. So far, she said, 12 states have chosen to adopt California's standards, pending a waiver approval. Others are in the process of doing so. If all 50 states adopted California's law, it would reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions by 1.4 gigatons, about twice what the federal standards would achieve by then, Nichols said.

The outcome of the tailpipe issue may be determined by the next administration, said Brown, who added that he had written the presidential candidates to ask their positions on the waiver. All the Democrats support California's position, but only one Republican, Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), answered Brown's letter in the affirmative.

Testifying Thursday, Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club, urged Californians to focus on the Feb. 5 primary and demand that all candidates endorse the waiver. Although polls show that Americans overwhelmingly support strong measures to curb global warming, and 150 New Hampshire town halls approved resolutions urging candidates to address global warming, the issue has been largely dormant in the presidential campaign, Pope said.

California leaders take aim at EPA at Senate committee briefing

By NOAKI SCHWARTZ , Associated Press Writer
Modesto Bee, Friday, January 11, 2008

LOS ANGELES — A panel of outraged state and environmental leaders met Thursday to examine why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency denied a waiver that would have allowed California and 16 other states to regulate emissions from cars, trucks and SUVs.

The denial was the first time the EPA had refused California a waiver under the Clean Air Act since Congress gave the state the right to obtain such waivers in 1967. In response, California sued the federal government.

"I think it is fair to say that in the intervening ... years, no administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency has issued a decision which more flagrantly violated the clear language and intent of the Clean Air Act, or more fundamentally threatened the American people," Carl Pope, the executive director of the Sierra Club, told a Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works during the field briefing.

Last month EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson rejected the state's arguments that it faced unique threats from climate change. Johnson said the federal government has a national plan to raise fuel economy standards that would be more effective than a patchwork of state regulations.

The EPA's denial angered members of Congress, including Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Henry Waxman, California Democrats who chair the committees that oversee the EPA. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., called on the agency's inspector general to investigate allegations that Johnson acted against recommendations from his technical and legal staff in denying the waiver.

The EPA said it would turn over all documents about its decision, but Boxer's committee was unable to get the paperwork in time for Thursday's hearing.

"Where's the work? Where's the beef behind this decision?" Boxer asked as she waved around an empty cardboard box with the label "EPA Documents."

Before her was an empty chair reserved for Johnson, who did not attend the hearing. EPA spokesman Jonathan Shradar said Johnson had a busy schedule and was preparing to address the waiver issue before a full hearing of Boxer's committee in Washington on Jan. 24.

On either side of that chair sat Pope, California Attorney General Edmund G. Brown Jr., state Air Resources Board Chairman Mary Nichols and Natural Resources Defense Council senior climate adviser Fran Pavley.

Brown railed against the EPA and the Bush administration, calling the refusal a "backroom deal" with automakers.

California officials have argued that their more aggressive law would require the auto industry to cut emissions by one-third in new vehicles by 2016, boosting efficiency to about 36.8 mpg. An analysis released by state air regulators showed their 2004 tailpipe regulation would be faster and tougher than the federal fuel economy rules.

Twelve other states - Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington - have adopted California's emissions

The EPA's Dec. 19 decision was a victory for automakers, which argued that they would be forced to reduce their selection of vehicles and raise prices in states that adopted California's standards.

Industry heeds call for hydrogen fuel

Financial help pledged to bolster drive for nonpolluting vehicles

By Kimberly Kindy, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU
Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, January 11, 2008

SACRAMENTO — California Air Resources Board officials met with more than a dozen energy companies and automakers Thursday to shore up wavering support for the governor's proposed hydrogen highway — a network of fueling stations to allow motorists to use nonpolluting fuel cell-powered vehicles.

Energy companies agreed Thursday to provide money and staff time needed to reopen a critical hydrogen station at the California Fuel Cell Partnership, a group of state and private organizations in Sacramento that are working to get hydrogen into mainstream use.

The closure was one of three recent sites to shutter, as well as another in Richmond that powered some AC Transit buses and cars.

"We are getting strong expressions of support from them to increase their level of commitments, including financially," said Mary Nichols, who chairs the air resources board, talking about the energy companies. "We can't discuss the details of this at this point."

Six energy companies had jointly operated the station — which is dedicated to hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicles under development by companies in the partnership — but the lease lapsed Dec. 31 and no new agreement has been reached.

Nichols said the increased support goes beyond the one station. Promises were made to find a way to get additional stations built as distrust and concern mounted in the energy and auto industry because, in addition to the three stations recently closing, plans for an additional three state-funded programs collapsed.

That includes a large-scale Bay Area station in San Carlos that was to be built by Pacific Gas & Electric Co.

The Air Resources Board said it will reissue bids for the projects in the next few weeks, and will add money to help upgrade two existing stations. There is already $7.7 million set aside for the competitive projects from past budgets. Another $6 million is being requested for future projects in Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed budget, which he released Thursday.

AC Transit plans to apply for the competitive funds to help replace its Richmond station. The transit agency is currently fueling its three hydrogen buses and 10 passenger cars at its Oakland hydrogen station, but is going to add eight new buses to its fleet as soon as this year and will need additional fuel supply to meet that demand.

"We definitely want to use those funds for a station and we are glad — given the budget deficit — that there is still money being made available," said Jaime Levin, director of alternative fuels policy with the transit district.

Mayor hails energy-saving drive

By Terri Hardy
Sacramento Bee, Friday, January 11, 2008

Mayor Heather Fargo doesn't think "being green" is just hip or trendy. And, she said, it's certainly not a fad or a catchphrase.
In fact, she told a group of 600 downtown leaders Thursday that slowing emissions and dealing with climate change need to be Sacramento's top priority.

"I want to ask you to help make this the agenda for Sacramento," Fargo said as part of her annual State of the Downtown address at Memorial Auditorium. "Every household, every person, even every business needs to join us in our efforts."

Fargo said in December the City Council passed two of her long-term goals for Sacramento: a sustainability master plan to reduce the city's energy use and carbon emissions and a green building program to promote sustainable, private development.

Downtown, with its walkable grid, its tree canopy and transit-oriented development, is leading by example, Fargo said. "It's the greenest neighborhood in Sacramento."

The push for green – in an environmental and economic sense – is being taken up regionally, Fargo said. Several organizations are working together to bring clean technology businesses to the area.

Matt Mahood, president and CEO of the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, said his group and others see green energy as a key economic engine for the area.

"As we look to 2008 – and the economy may look a little cloudy – this is our opportunity to grow the economy," Mahood said in an interview.

Robert Burris, deputy director of the Sacramento Area Commerce and Trade Organization, said his group over the past two years has been able to help persuade three new alternative energy companies to make their national headquarters in the Sacramento area.

Fargo said she's been a speaker at several sustainability conferences talking about the city's efforts, and is "in leadership positions helping Sacramento secure its reputation."

She pointed to the city's ranking as the 13th greenest city out of the country's 50 largest cities as an indicator that Sacramento is being recognized as a sustainability leader. The honor came from SustainLane, a nonprofit environmental organization, Fargo said.

"We're committed, and we're good," she said. "Together we can change the future of our planet. It's our obligation."

Fargo, who is running for re-election, also noted that the cause was a popular one. "Polls show that (voters) like us to lead in this regard," she said.

Downtown also was making progress in other ways, Fargo said.

City officials are close to sealing a deal that would move the downtown Greyhound bus station, a magnet for crime and the homeless, to a city-owned location on Richards Boulevard. A letter of intent between the city and the owner of the Greyhound site, Danny Benvenuti, needs to be signed.

"I'd hoped to hold it up and tell you it had been finalized, but we're not quite there yet," Fargo said. The mayor added she hoped the interim station on Richards could be opened in 2009.

And the mayor had some conciliatory words for Westfield, the owner of the Downtown Plaza.

Just last month, after the company had threatened to sue the city over its approval of the downtown railyard project, Fargo said the company had better deliver soon with its promises to revamp the mall.

Otherwise, she said, the company should sell to "someone who cares."

On Thursday, Fargo said she was "excited about Westfield's commitment to move forward with the first phase" of redeveloping the plaza, which includes opening up the mall at Seventh and K streets with a new food court and shops.

Conspicuously absent from the mayor's speech was any substantive mention of the economic problems that have slowed or killed several key projects downtown, including high-rise condos. Other speakers, while remaining upbeat on downtown's ultimate renaissance, weren't as circumspect.

Michael Ault, executive director of the Downtown Sacramento Partnership, which sponsors the yearly address, said 2007 was "a challenging year downtown, particularly with high-profile projects."

But he pointed to the steps made over the last five years, including adding 1,000 housing units, more than 200 businesses and 3 million square feet of office space.

Sacramento County Supervisor Roger Dickinson, who represents the downtown, noted the development disappointments in 2007 and acknowledged that there were people who wondered if "the vision will ever be reached."

Dickinson, however, said the area has made huge strides over the past 10 years.

"The road before us is shorter than the road behind," Dickinson said.

UC Merced researchers tackle fossil fuel dependency

By VICTOR A. PATTON - MERCED SUN-STAR
in the Modesto Bee, Friday, January 11, 2007

MERCED -- Humans have a long way to go before their seemingly perpetual dependence on gasoline is gone -- but studies by two University of California at Merced researchers could take an important step in that direction.

Gerardo Diaz, a professor at UC Merced's School of Engineering, and UC Merced staff researcher Joel Martinez-Frias are collaborating with scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory to develop and conduct a series of computer simulations testing the efficiency of certain alternative-fuel engines.

Diaz and Martinez-Frias will conduct their studies using a computerized model of a homogeneous charged-compression ignition engine that resembles a cross between a standard automobile engine and a diesel truck engine.

The computerized engine will be powered with alternative-fuel models, such as propane and hydrated ethanol. "We'll learn from the simulations what we can do to improve (engine) efficiency," Martinez-Frias said.

The researchers will then take their findings and compare them with data from lab experiments.

"Diesel engines tend to have more problems (with) emissions of pollutants, but they have high efficiency. On the other hand, engines from automobiles have less efficiency -- but they have less emissions," Diaz said. "We are working on an engine that takes the best of both worlds with low emissions and high efficiency -- and we're modeling the way that engine works."

A near-term goal

The team on Lawrence Livermore's side is led by Salvador Aceves, director of the Engineering Directorate's Energy Conversion and Storage Group. Together, the researchers hope to ultimately develop tools that can help the automotive industry create better fuel-efficient vehicles -- a prospect that may not be that far in the future.

Diaz said Lawrence Livermore researchers already have forged relationships with such corporations as Cummins and Ford Motor Co. Mercedes-Benz also has created a concept car that uses a similar technology, Diaz said.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the aim of the project is to accelerate new engine technologies that help cut the country's dependence on foreign oil and fossil fuels, as well as to lower carbon and toxic emissions.

"This is not (within) a 50-year time frame. We are trying to do things so that basically we see the results relatively soon, within this decade for instance," Diaz said.

The team's research on alternative-fuel engines also is important, Diaz said, given the controversy over global warming and the effects that harmful emissions have upon the Earth's atmosphere.

"If we can address these types of situations (by) looking at technologies which are going to increase the efficiency of engines and also reduce pollution, then we are going to be helping the environment," Diaz said. "Anything that addresses those types of problems is worth pursuing."

UC Merced researchers began the project with Lawrence Livermore on Dec. 1., operating on a $205,000 subcontract with the national laboratory, funded over the course of two years by the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

They previously worked with Lawrence Livermore researchers on a similar project which studied an assimilated engine powered by hydrogen, oxygen and argon.

Utility system hopes to turn sludge into fuel

Scientists might someday convert East Bay sewage into biodiesel product

By Doug Oakley, Staff Writer
Contra Costa Times, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008

A dream of producing a million gallons of biodiesel fuel a year from local restaurant sewage is closer to reality for a small group of scientists thinking big at the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

The utility's treatment plant near the Bay Bridge currently processes about a million gallons a month of coarse, dirty kitchen grease that goes down local restaurant sewer lines.

About four years ago, scientists started researching whether the sludge could be turned into fuel.

In August, they finished a pilot program that produced 50 to 100 gallons of fuel a month, proving the conversion could be done on a massive scale.

Unlike other biodiesel producers who take used fryer oil or "yellow grease" from restaurants and turn it into fuel, the utility is working with "brown grease," which until now has only been turned into fuel in tiny amounts inside laboratories, said Donald Gray, a senior civil engineer who came up with the idea to produce it on a large scale.

Brown grease is the most difficult to turn into biodiesel because it is so dirty, full of plastic, food and water that needs to be separated, said Ben Horenstein, manager of environmental services. And when burned, it tends to give off air-polluting sulfur.

"We were taking the grease and processing it through our treatment facilities. Then there was this concept that we can do what other people are doing with yellow grease," Horenstein said. "We've run four diesel trucks on it with 100 percent biodiesel and different blends, and we've had a lot of success."

If the results of tailpipe emissions tests come out clean at the end of this month, Gray said scientists at the utility plan to urge the board of directors to construct a plant that could produce enough biodiesel to fuel the 300,000 gallons its diesel engines suck up each year -- and a whole lot more.

"We're not really sure what we would do with the excess (up to 700,000 gallons a year)," Gray said. "There's the potential of selling to the trucks that go right by us on the way to the Port of Oakland. Or we could work out (a plan to sell) to another public agency."

Although a plant could cost anywhere from $900,000 to $4 million to build, and the process is expensive by itself, the utility is in a good position to go forward because restaurants pay it to take the grease off their hands, said Horenstein.

"The interesting thing is we think we would break even, given the current price of diesel. But if you project the price out over 15 years, that's where the savings come in," Horenstein said. "Our interest is, 'Can we be sustainable, do the right thing and make it cost-effective?'"

Horenstein said that unlike the city of Berkeley, which lost a couple of diesel engines when it started running 100 percent biodiesel in its trucks a couple of years ago, his engines have "done super; we've had no adverse effects."

Alicia Chakrabarti, assistant engineer at the utility, proved that the biofuel could actually be made on a large scale, after doing research on paper.

She said there are environmental drawbacks to producing biofuel from crops such as soy beans, because oil, gas and land are used to grow the crops in the first place. "So if we can produce fuel from a waste, it's very exciting," Chakrabarti said. "There are other ways to derive energy from waste such as producing methane for electricity but to have something that can replace transportation fuel, that's even more exciting."

Gray said it's satisfying to be able to prove with strict scientific standards that making biofuel from sewage grease is possible.

"There are other groups producing it from brown grease, but in very small batches, and I'm not even sure they have looked at whether it meets (engine and air quality) standards," Gray said. "It's harder with brown grease. For example, if you screw up the process, you get soap instead of fuel."

Keeping the pedal to the metal

College of Alameda is keeping its students on top of changes in automotive technology
By Shirleen Schermerhorn, Correspondent
Contra Costa Times, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008

Learning how to repair a car or truck isn't as simple as it used to be.

"All we had to understand when I was a student in the mid-'70s was carburetors and distributor caps," says Ed Jaramillo, automotive technology instructor at the College of Alameda. "Our students now will need to know more about electronics -- batteries and computers -- and they will need more diagnostic skills. The need for critical thinking skills now is about 10 times what it was 30 years ago."

College of Alameda's award-winning programs in transportation technologies train future automotive, diesel, truck and aviation maintenance mechanics.

"Earlier on I would not have conceived that a laptop computer would be part of the diesel mechanic's toolbox," says Mike Robertson, instructor in the diesel mechanics program, which trains students to be beginning mechanics or apprentices on trucks, buses, tractors and other heavy-duty equipment. "Now mechanics use the Internet as a resource.

"When I go to troubleshoot a part today," says Robertson, "I can have the engineer online, and he can see what's happening. So we ensure that students have good computer skills. They also study more electronics, but not at the expense of eliminating basic electricity."

The instructors face the challenge of how to train people for careers in a field undergoing rapid change. According to a 2005 report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the largest single source of air pollution in the United States is transportation. Especially in California, with its addiction to driving, changes in the transportation industry will have to be a part of the "Green Revolution."

Vehicles today may be powered by diesel and biodiesel, hydrogen, electricity and hybrids, as well as gasoline injection directly into the cylinder. Nobody knows which of these will be used in the future.

Jaramillo says the problem isn't new.

"Every five years a new technology is supposed to take over. In 1973, the rotary engine was going to take over," he said. "In the late '70s it was diesel. Then it was turbo charge, then the electric car, and now the hybrid. When there are problems, like the early electric cars not going far enough on a charge, the public refuses to buy. Then another technology becomes popular."

The best solution to training students for rapid change, according to the instructors, is to build a strong foundation. "Strong basics, job-ready skills," says Robertson, "but not specific knowledge of one product.
We leave it up to factories to do specialized training that is required for their own cutting-edge technology, but we keep the foundation running forward."
Jaramillo says, "What we do is every year add a little bit of new technology. The student's first job out of here will most likely be in an independent shop, working on cars that are from five to 20 years old. We have to prepare them for that."

"We teach a bit of hybrid technology," says Jaramillo, "but the work and training are still at the dealership level, because hybrid cars are still under warranty."
College of Alameda's automotive technology program is also part of the Toyota Associates Program, which allows students to take up to six of the eight specialized Toyota training classes at the college, and have special opportunities for job placement in local Toyota dealerships.

In the diesel mechanics program, Robertson says, "College of Alameda has been involved in heavy-duty alternative fuels for more than 20 years. We have two factory alternative fuel trainers in our shop, one CNG (compressed natural gas) and the other LNG (liquid natural gas). Students learn the service and maintenance issues in dealing with these, one under extremely high pressure (3,000 pounds) and the other extremely cold (-257 degrees)."

As for the current move to biodiesel, Robertson says the research doesn't yet exist to demonstrate that biodiesel is a good investment. "The benefit is that every gallon of biodiesel is one less gallon we import.

"Is there an emissions benefit? You have to look at what energy it took to create biodiesel and add that to the emissions created in running it," he said.

"Biodiesel also has a problem with lubricity (lubrication quality), which can reduce engine life." he added. "At the present time biodiesel uses the same engines as diesel, so we don't do special training."

But he does use information from the California Air Resources Board and the factories to alert his students about special things to look for with biodiesel.

So what will be the technology of the future?

"One theory," says Jaramillo, "is that if we just had four-cylinder engines we'd solve the pollution problem." But his choice for the future would be the new, quiet, low-polluting diesel.

"Fifty percent of the cars in Germany use diesel, but not the kind we use -- one that's better, 'quiet diesel,' using CO2 filters to reduce pollution. The next technology has to reduce CO2 emissions."

Robertson believes that, too, will be a temporary solution. "Diesel is not the future, because fossil fuel is diminishing and emission control is difficult. Alternate fuel choices that we have today will be stopgap measures for fuels tomorrow."

All of the current fuels use internal combustion engines, so it's difficult to control emissions, he says. "An exception is the Stirling engine, which runs on waste heat. It's a different conceptual design. We introduce students to it."

The Stirling engine, which produces no exhaust gases and operates very quietly, currently is used only in some specialized applications like submarines and auxiliary power generators.

"What we teach about Stirling, electric, diesel -- the foundation is the same," says Robertson, "the mechanics is the same."

The difference, according to Jaramillo, is that, "Thirty years ago in two years you could get all the training necessary to be an automotive technician. Now, auto tech is a lifelong learning experience."

Contra Costa Times editorial, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008:

We're all responsible for cutting pollution

IT HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN that air pollution negatively affects people's health and often leads to premature deaths. It's believed to lead to respiratory problems and heart attacks. Everything from microscopic airborne dusts, which can damage lungs, to "dirty" electrical power to ozone pollution can be an issue.

While some bicker about the truth of global warming, there is no doubt, no argument, that too much of a good and necessary thing is dangerous. Too much carbon dioxide in the air disrupts the balance of the ecosystem and is toxic. A new study from Stanford University links CO in the air to human deaths.

No matter where one sides in the global warming argument, everyone should be for less pollution. There should be no debate that humans cause a great deal of pollutants or that, with a concerted effort, can lessen it.

We can demand better from industries, but we must do better individually. The greatest source of emissions is from personal vehicles.

Regardless of one's position in the warming debate, being conscious of our "carbon footprint" is a step that protects health -- ours, our children's and many as-yet-unborn children's -- through the reduction of carbon pollution.

It can start with the purchase of a new vehicle, one that uses less fuel and uses it more efficiently. Support the development of alternatives to oil-based fuels.

But it can start even smaller. Turn off lights when they're not being used. Turn down the heat by a degree or two; turn down your water heater setting by a couple of degrees. Hang your laundry instead of tumble drying. Walk or jog instead of driving to the gym. None of those cost a thing and will actually save money. Many other ways exist to reduce energy use, as well as ways to offset carbon pollution; it's just a matter of believing you can make a difference and wanting to do it.

Letter to the Contra Costa Times, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008:

Global warming believers should blow less hot air

A recent letter illustrated why there are still naysayers with regard to the anthropogenic global warming scare.

The letter writer describes how he saw, firsthand, the ravages of global warming. He saw this while on a 39,000-mile RV trip around the country, a trip that spewed 75,000 pounds of carbon dioxide into the air along with countless other toxins. This is five times the U.S. average household annual contribution from auto usage.

If human-caused global warming is truly a problem that requires human sacrifice to solve it, why did this writer not see it appropriate to make the sacrifice? I could ask the same question of Al Gore and countless others among the 69 percent of believers.

My point is, when any problem has true, identifiable, catastrophic consequences, all solutions to the problem should be considered.

In considering conservation, commuting five miles a day in an SUV should be recognized as equivalent to commuting 50 miles a day in a hybrid. Likewise, when considering renewable energy, nuclear power should have its place in the mix alongside wind, wave, hydro and solar.

Real problems require real solutions. If viable solutions are deliberately ignored and true believers are unwilling to make tough sacrifices, then maybe there is a reason to doubt the claims of an anthropogenic global warming catastrophe.

When the 69 percent decide to make serious, personal sacrifices, maybe the remaining 31 percent will take them seriously. Until then, it will continue to sound like hot air.

David Swift, Live

Letters to the Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Jan. 11, 2008:

Plan shouldn't hurt families

I would like to respond to a recent column by Lois Henry. Henry charged that the federal EPA hates Kern County children. She discerns this because of the striking down of laws to reduce auto emissions by 2016.

What Henry must have missed in her research is that President Bush and the EPA are rolling out a national program as part of the Clean Air Act, instead of this state-by-state approach. Look up the EPA press release on Dec. 12 on their Web page.

As stated in her column, new regulations will cost business $20 billion. Businesses do not pay taxes. Business passes on all these costs to the end buyer. We pay those increases in the form of higher prices, fees and lower quality goods that we buy every day.

Californians already pay through the nose because of these taxes, yet we think sticking it to big business doesn't affect us. These taxes are most hurtful to low income families and their children because they don't have the additional income to keep paying these increased costs. Look at the side of the gas pump and see how much per gallon you pay is tax.

We all want clean air and a better environment. We need to have a cost-effective plan that doesn't burden the families of Kern County by taxing what little they have left. We need to start looking at the national picture with a little better research before we start saying our leaders "hate" our children.

Thomas Trammell, Bakersfield

Tejon's deal with SJV air board

Very recently, Tejon Ranch and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District made arrangements for the district to receive over $10 million for air quality mitigation for Tejon Ranch's planned Mountain Village housing development in Lebec.

Last year, the California Air Resources Board cited a mobile air monitor in Lebec that told our communities that Lebec had worse air pollution than downtown Los Angeles.

The mountain communities wouldn't even have known about the sweet deal that Tejon and the air district were arranging if a reporter from The Californian hadn't called and informed a resident three days before the item was to be discussed at the air district's meeting.

Our community didn't have enough time to attend the meeting. We've asked the air district for the minutes -- we haven't received them yet, but we were told that the board decided unanimously to accept the money.

Shame on Tejon Ranch and shame on the air district for making what appears to be a back-room deal. The Environmental Impact Report for Mountain Village hasn't even come out yet. Tejon Ranch has had an air monitor in the area of their proposed development for almost three years, but they have refused to let the public see any of their data. There is no way of knowing what Tejon should be mitigating without knowing what is going on now.

Tejon's deal with the air district appears to violate provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act giving communities an adequate opportunity to participate in the process of approving large projects like Mountain Village.

Linda McKay, Lebec

Letters to the Sacramento Bee, Thursday, January 10, 2008:

Too much is at stake

Definitely no. Too much is at stake for the residents of Rocklin.

More traffic from Clover Valley, Whitney Ranch, Bickford Ranch and Twelve Bridges will end up on Rocklin streets. More traffic noise and more traffic past several schools. Thousands of more cars through a senior community on Park Drive.

More air pollution and carbon dioxide. At 7.5 tons per year per vehicle, the 1,100 vehicles in Clover Valley will add 8,250 tons of carbon dioxide each year.
Destruction of 7,400 oak trees to be replaced by "yard trees." Potential damage to ecosystems and American Indian historical sites. Damage to wildlife and habitat.

I don't care what the "Yes" folks say, you can't add 1,100 vehicles and not increase traffic, congestion and air pollution.

Don Perera, Rocklin

The reasons are obvious

I'm voting "No" on Measure H: No more traffic, no more houses, no more noise, no more pollution.

Roger Crawford, Springfield resident, Rocklin

Traffic, air will worsen

I am voting "No" on Measure H. I live in the Stanford Ranch area of Rocklin. The homes and schools in this shallow valley in Rocklin will be drastically affected if the connector expressway goes through Clover Valley and connects us to Sierra College Boulevard. The noise of traffic from just those who live here is enormous, and adding 14,000 more vehicles will destroy our property values.
Removing 7,000 huge oaks and replacing them with the usual-size development trees will increase air pollution for all of us, especially the children and teens who play sports or do cross-country running on the streets around Rocklin High.

It is unbelievable to me that our City Council members are so focused on development they are willing to look the other way when it comes to increased air pollution and our children.

I want to see true open space, a reasonable buyout for the owner and increased property values for all of Rocklin with a nature preserve in our town.

J. Dunlap, Rocklin