

## **Congresswoman critical of EPA report**

### **Solis says agency downplays pollution's impact on poor**

By Shirley Hsu, Staff Writer

Pasadena Star-News

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Claims that dirty air, contaminated water and lack of parks are problems that disproportionately burden poor communities and minorities are not news.

In fact, they're the main tenet of the "environmental justice" movement.

But an environmental justice draft plan recently released by the Environmental Protection Agency ignores race and income in considering how to deal with air pollution. That's what Rep. Hilda Solis reported Wednesday during an "environmental roundtable" with representatives from the EPA, South Coast Air Quality Management District, a water district and environmental groups.

The EPA's plan "loosens up and waters down what environmental justice is all about," the El Monte Democrat said, calling for a public hearing on the issue.

Discussion at the forum, held in Los Angeles by Solis, ran from pesticides used on school lawns to San Gabriel Valley gravel pits and air pollution caused by increasing train and truck traffic through the area.

Some 75 percent to 80 percent of air pollution in the region now comes from mobile sources -- trucks, trains, ships and planes -- which the AQMD has little control over, said David Madson of the AQMD.

AQMD officials lambasted a June rail emissions agreement between the state Air Resources Board and two rail companies, made without local input, according to the AQMD.

The agreement's provisions are weak and contain loopholes and a "poison pill" provision that if local governments or air districts try to adopt regulations to curb rail emissions on their own, the agreement is off, according to the AQMD.

The Air Resources Board will hold a public meeting about the agreement at 6 p.m. Wednesday at Commerce City Hall, 2535 Commerce Way.

Solis focused on the effects of pollution on children in poor and minority communities and lack of recreation space -- the San Gabriel Valley has less than one-half an acre of green space per 1,000 people, Solis said.

In Southern California, African Americans are a third more likely and Latinos nearly twice as likely to live near facilities that emit toxic air pollutants, she said.

## **TV ad's claims disputed by KMC**

### **Nonprofit group claims hospital's financial woes due to illegal immigrants**

By NADA BEHZIZ, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday Aug. 25, 2005

The camera zooms in on a dimly lit hospital room. The lifeline on a heart monitor slowly blinks until it goes dead.

The lifeline is for Kern Medical Center.

Television advertisements paid for by the nonprofit Californians for Population Stabilization use the Bakersfield hospital as an example of a health care industry under siege.

The group claims public hospitals such as KMC are dying because of the high cost of uninsured, undocumented people.

But Peter Bryan, the hospital's CEO, said illegal immigrants are not at the heart of the hospital's woes.

The hospital spends about \$14.4 million a year on undocumented patients and the state reimburses the hospital most of that money -- about \$13.8 million, Bryan said.

The majority of undocumented people who go to KMC -- at least 90 percent, Bryan said -- are pregnant women looking for prenatal care.

The group's television ad says Kern Medical Center is closing clinics, laying off employees and turning people away because of overpopulation. And this overpopulation is mostly due to illegal immigrants coming into the state, said the group's spokeswoman, Diana Hull.

"Our largest influx of immigrants are not legal immigrants," Hull said. "One of the problems is that (hospitals) are willing to pay and provide free care to uninsured patients, including undocumented patients who shouldn't be here in the first place."

This group said KMC exemplifies a statewide trend of mass immigration draining the state's resources.

"(The ad) is not correct. We haven't laid off employees since I've been CEO. And we are not closing clinics because of immigrants," Bryan said. "They are up and running and doing very well, thank you."

Hull points to a study by the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems, a nonprofit that studies public hospitals.

The organization's case study of KMC said the hospital was on the brink of bankruptcy.

Bryan admits the public hospital had lost about \$11 million in 2003 and another \$4.2 million in 2004.

But for the first time in five years, KMC has made a profit this year.

The group's national ad campaign blames not only the state's health care troubles on immigration, but also bad air quality and pollution.

A man hacking due to Bakersfield's bad air quality emanates over national radio waves. In between coughs, he says Bakersfield is the nation's second most polluted city because of overpopulation -- a direct cause of immigration.

The group calls on California's governor to follow New Mexico and Arizona in declaring a state of emergency over illegal immigration.

Californians for Population Stabilization is a nonprofit group focused on controlling immigration.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2005:](#)

### **Changing air board is worth a try**

Changing the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board's membership may do little to clean up our badly polluted air. But it's worth a try. Senate Bill 999, by Sen. Mike Machado, D-Stockton, will give more clout to the southern San Joaquin Valley in deciding air cleanup strategies and more independence to the district's decision-making board.

The bill is pending a vote in the Assembly after already passing the Senate. SB 999 deserves support.

The bill proposes to expand membership of the air district's governing board from its present 11 members to 15. Presently the board is comprised of representatives from each of the district's eight counties and three of its cities.

City representatives are selected based on geography and population. A Bakersfield representative presently serves on the board, but will likely be replaced by one from another city.

Machado proposes to give Stockton, Fresno and Bakersfield permanent seats on the board, with two additional seats created for representatives from smaller cities. In addition, the California Air

Resources Board will name two public representatives: medical and air pollution experts who live within the district.

The rationale behind Machado's plan is that the board's present makeup is too beholden to economic and political interests within county jurisdictions. Board members approach pollution strategies from a parochial focus.

The addition of public members with expertise in health and air pollution will expand "expert knowledge" beyond that provided by the district's staff. Giving Bakersfield a permanent seat on the board will increase the clout of southern San Joaquin Valley residents.

After all, pollution floats downwind to Kern County from northern counties. Kern's industries, particularly the oil industry, generate a large share of the permit fees that finance the district's operation. It is only fair that the concerns of Kern County and Bakersfield residents be heard.

The San Joaquin Valley has some of the nation's most polluted air. Asthma rates in children and adults are high. Polluted air is blamed for more than 1,200 premature deaths a year.

Will Machado's plan to give greater independence to the air pollution control district board help clean up the air? Who knows? But it's worth a try.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2005:](#)

### **Farmers need to be defended and supported**

In response to Dawn Jones ["Your Views," Aug. 10], who is noticing the loss of our orchards to more and more homes. First of all, I'd like to say I believe in making room for people to live and doing so in a careful thought-through way by city planners.

Here is a thought though: Has anyone noticed how often farmers are being criticized by the news media in negative ways and taken to court by environmental groups? They both often claim the farming of animals or crops cause pollution of air or water or whatever else they can think of to make a farmer look like an enemy. The farmers supposedly are the ones who mistreat animals because the animals are not roaming free on the plains. Excuse me? If the animals were mistreated they would die. How could a farmer survive?

This country had better open its eyes and realize only 1 percent or 2 percent of the people in the United States now produce all your food, and if they are pushed out, our country will be dependent on foreign food as well as oil.

What Dawn should know is many farmers get tired of the fight against groups who sue them and end up selling their land and leave farming. The small farmer can't survive with all the costs in new regulations.

The next time you send money to an environmental group check their Web site and make sure you agree with what they stand for.