

County leaders to discuss priorities for 2009

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

The Kings County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday will discuss its wish list for the coming year. Among the 27 priority areas so far identified for federal and state legislative actions include:

- reauthorization of the Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Funds, which provided the county with more than \$644,000 in Fiscal Year 2007-2008.
- legislation for distribution of economic stimulus for building and infrastructure projects.
- gang task force and narcotics task force
- realigning of U.S. milk supply and demand
- laws facilitating water storage projects
- agreements between counties and tribal governments for mitigation of local impacts from the gaming business activities on tribal lands.

The board is also scheduled to consider reviewing and approving the vehicle assignments, including their home retention status, as part of the county vehicle policy adopted last July.

In other business, the board will make appointments to the Museum Advisory Committee, Kings County Advisory Committee for the [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#) and Agricultural Advisory Committee. The board will also hold a study session concerning the possible transfer of bio-terrorism preparedness functions from the health department to the fire department.

The Board of Supervisors meets at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the Board Chambers, 1400 Lacey Blvd., Hanford.

Local air regulators say Kingsburg plant is not a polluter

By Kim Anderson

Kingsburg Recorder Tues. Jan. 27, 2009

An animal feed plant in Kingsburg might be the source of toxins being spewed into the air -- or maybe not. A recent study done by USA TODAY to identify schools that could be affected by industrial pollution suggested that the feed plant Nutrius LLC might be releasing toxins into the air and affecting the air quality at local schools. However, another study, done by the local air quality regulators, says otherwise. "So far we're not seeing any real risk," said Rick McVaigh, deputy air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The study done by the district uses more specific information than the USA TODAY study and showed no significant risk to human health from air pollution at schools in Kingsburg and Tulare.

The Environmental Protection Agency said in a statement that the tools and data used by USA TODAY are made available to increase public awareness, help the state and local environmental and public health agencies and encourage action to be taken.

Those tools have their limits, the statement said, and USA TODAY's rankings should not be taken as definitive. More information is needed to really know the risks from toxic air pollutants at any given location.

McVaigh said the Valley air district has visited the plant and looked at where the toxins might be coming from. They will use the information they gathered to recalculate and look for risks, which will take a few weeks.

Nutrius Plant Manager Rich Leendertsen said they are currently waiting for results from that information and nothing new has come about. He also said that the company is not aware of any environmental issues with toxic chemicals.

The study done by USA TODAY used emissions from 2005 and was done using a computer program, which was developed by the EPA.

That program, the Risk-Screening Environmental Indicator, was developed to analyze risk factors, examine trends and screen for impacts from emissions.

The statement released by the EPA, however, stated that that model is not the right tool to determine the quality of the air outside of schools. The program was designed to be the first step in a multi-step process to see if there might be toxic emissions released into the air. Additional information and analysis is needed before the issue can be more accurately evaluated.

The emissions the model identified from Nutrius consisted of three metal compounds: manganese, copper and zinc. All three are added in the production of animal feed and supplements.

According to the model, these toxins were spread throughout Tulare County as well as areas in Fresno, Kings and Kern counties.

Three schools in Kingsburg were ranked in the worst 2 percent of about 128,000 schools in the study. Among them is Lincoln Elementary School, which is across the street from the plant.

Principal Jennifer DuPras said Nutrius has been a neighbor to the school for a long time and there has never been a huge concern about the plant. Well before this study came out, students had been encouraged to monitor the way they are feeling.

"We talk to the kids and tell them to monitor how they are feeling," she said. "If they are not feeling well, they can sit in the cafeteria during recess or something."

The county has flags of different colors representing the air quality for the day and DuPras says she checks it everyday then hangs the flag of that color up to make teachers and students aware of the air quality. This is to help kids who have asthma and limit outside activity if air conditions are bad.

As far as concerns about the study, DuPras said she has very few.

"I haven't had any parents or teachers mention the report," she said. "All I can say is we have a very high rate of attendance."

DuPras said she can only look at facts and figures to determine how big of an issue this is and it seems, she said, to not be anything too significant.

"I'm not a scientist so I only look at data I have which is attendance rates and concerns brought to me," she said. "I haven't received any negative reaction."

Hurley Elementary School in Visalia is downwind from the plant and could be affected. The school is also near the Kawneer plant in Visalia.

An air sensor was used to test this and see what else might be in the air at the school. Two other chemicals were found that were not in the USA TODAY study. Those two chemicals were the cleaning agent carbon tetrachloride and benzene, which is in exhaust from cars.

Leendertsen said that school has not reported any issues to them.

"We are 25 miles from the school mentioned in the article and we do not believe there are any issues," he said. "We are cooperating with the EPA and Valley air board, which are investigating information in the article."

What exactly this study means can be a bit confusing but McVaigh said they are not seeing anything that people should be worried about.

People should be aware, however, about the risks of manganese exposure.

If it's inhaled at high concentrations, it can lead to a disease called manganism, which shows similar symptoms to Parkinson's disease.

Most of the schools ranked in the top 50 in the USA TODAY study showed manganese present at a rate many times greater than anything seen locally.

"So far we're not seeing any significant risks," McVaigh said. "We're meeting with people and trying to identify any potential problems."

Most forum attendees vote for denser growth

Plan would put 31 people in 10 homes per acre on average

By Russell Clemings, The Fresno Bee

In the Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

FRESNO -- A public forum Monday narrowly endorsed tight limits on future urban sprawl in the Valley, setting the stage for a debate that culminates this spring with votes by government officials throughout the region.

Fifty-three percent of the nearly 600 people attending the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Project's public summit at the downtown Fresno Convention Center said they preferred a plan that would put 31 people, or 10 homes, on an average acre of new development, compared with 13 people, or about four homes, under present trends.

The recommendation now goes to a panel consisting of elected officials from each of the eight Valley counties. Its fate there is uncertain. Many of those officials have already said they back a third option for 18 people, or about six homes, per acre.

"I'm worried that we'll come up with a great plan and then people will come out of the woodwork and start taking potshots at it," said Ed Thompson, California director for the American Farmland Trust, who spoke shortly before the vote.

The two-year-old state-funded Blueprint program is billed as an effort to sketch a broad vision of the Valley at midcentury. Its major goals are to preserve farms and wildlife by reducing sprawl, and to cut air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of miles driven by the region's residents.

When completed, the Blueprint will not be binding on the region's cities and counties. But state transportation and affordable housing funds could be tied to how well a local agency follows the plan.

The significance of that wasn't lost on Madera County Supervisor Frank Bigelow, who also spoke.

"Cities will have less control, counties will have less control, special districts will have less control" over the way they build, he said.

Moreover, the group attending the summit was largely white, about half older than 50 and skewed toward planners and other government officials, Bigelow noted, questioning whether those present represented a true cross-section of the increasingly Latino Valley.

Mike McCoy, co-director of the Information Center for the Environment at the University of California at Davis and a leader of the computer work that went into the future growth scenarios, cautioned against placing too much emphasis on the average housing densities in each version.

Small towns will likely have lower housing densities than the average. Part of cities like Fresno may be much higher than average.

Similarly, Keith Bergthold, Fresno's interim planning director, advocated looking at the scenarios in a broad rather than specific way. He described the Blueprint as "the first step of many steps" needed to define the Valley's future. But he said it is an important one.

"This is the beginning of a conversation we need to have," he said.

How shall we grow? These residents suggest compact development

By JENNY SHEARER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009

FRESNO — A cross-section of San Joaquin Valley voices on Monday suggested future development be compact: an average of 10 dwelling units per acre, with walkable communities and open space for agricultural and environmental uses.

The some 500 people who attended the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Summit included government officials, builders, environmentalists and others interested in how the region grows.

They were there to talk about the “blueprint,” an eight-county effort to identify a vision and create an action plan.

The compact scenario they picked will next go to the San Joaquin Valley Policy Council, possibly by late March. Two elected officials from each governing board of the eight councils of governments comprise the policy council; Supervisor Michael Rubio and Wasco Councilwoman Cheryl Wegman represent Kern.

The policy council has four recommended scenarios to mull, and their input would next return to the local level for ratification. Although it’s a regional planning process, all land-use decisions are ultimately up to local officials.

Monday’s recommended approach differs from what the Kern Council of Governments adopted late last year.

Based on public outreach, the transportation and planning agency opted for an average density of 5.9 dwelling units per acre.

“Let’s set a reasonable goal as our first goal,” said Darrel Hildebrand, Kern COG’s assistant director.

Speaking with one voice is the best way to ensure the valley’s needs are met and not dwarfed by Los Angeles and the Bay Area, said Barry Hibbard, vice president of commercial and industrial development at Tejon Ranch, during a panel discussion.

The San Joaquin Valley is home to about 3 million people; by 2050, that number could reach 9.4 million people.

Report: Hillside Ordinance to have little environmental impact

BY JAMES GELUSO, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009

Bakersfield has released its draft report on the environmental impact of the controversial 2006 revision of the Hillside Ordinance.

The report basically concludes that the ordinance, which created limits on where homes can be built on the hills behind the bluffs south of Hart Park, has very little impact.

It won’t create traffic or air pollution or glare or any of the many other things studied in an environmental impact report.

The report also likely won’t have much impact.

The city was ordered to write the report last year by a judge after Sacramento-based General Holding, which plans to develop the hills, sued the city.

But the developer also asked the judge to throw the ordinance out until the report was approved, and the judge declined to do that.

General Holding’s project, the 1,300-home development called The Canyons, is currently slated to go before the Bakersfield City Council Feb. 11. If it’s approved as expected, that will render the issue moot.

Nonetheless, the city's planning commission is slated to hold a hearing on the report on Feb. 5 to discuss the adequacy of the draft. The city will take comments on the report until Feb. 23, and the planning commission will hold a hearing before deciding whether to recommend the report on March 19.

L.A. port's clean-truck program running on empty

Funding for a \$20,000 incentive for buyers of clean-fuel trucks has dried up. Some trucking firms have spent millions of dollars on greener fleets, expecting the cash.

By Ronald D. White

L.A. Times, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

It sounded like a good deal: The Port of Los Angeles offered to pay \$20,000 incentives as part of its Clean Trucks Program, launched Oct. 1 in conjunction with the neighboring Long Beach port to reduce pollution from trucking fleets serving the harbor.

That sent Vic La Rosa into overdrive.

The owner of Total Transportation Services Inc. ordered 111 trucks, some powered by cleaner-burning diesel and some by liquefied natural gas, each eligible for the \$20,000 because they meet 2007 emissions standards.

Then came the roadblocks.

Port officials were expecting only modest interest in the incentive program -- maybe 1,000 rigs -- because eligibility hinged on far surpassing the requirements of the Clean Trucks Program, which initially bans all trucks built before 1989. Instead, more than 100 large and small trucking companies turned out, with as many as 7,500 trucks requiring grant money over the course of the next year.

On top of that, state officials nixed funding assistance and a federal agency blocked the collection of fees to support the program, forcing the L.A. port to dip into its strained budget for \$44 million to cover the first 2,200 trucks.

That's leaving Total Transportation Services of Rancho Dominguez and other motor carriers short of a full load.

"It's like no good deed goes unpunished," said La Rosa, who spent an average of \$130,000 on his trucks. "We followed their directions and their plans. We felt it was the port's responsibility to follow through on this. We're out over \$15 million on these truck purchases."

Some carriers are worried they could go under if they don't get all of the help they had anticipated.

Overseas Freight Inc. of Long Beach has committed to overhauling two-thirds of its 80-truck fleet and says it needs the \$20,000 it expected for each new vehicle.

"Without the \$20,000 promised by the Port of Los Angeles, it will be very difficult for us to get through the tough economic times ahead," Joseph Wang, president of Overseas Freight, said in a recent letter to S. David Freeman, president of L.A.'s Board of Harbor Commissioners. The family-owned business has ordered 54 clean trucks, Wang said.

Brian Griley, president of Southern Counties Express Inc., a Rancho Dominguez company, has purchased 50 LNG trucks and 55 new diesel trucks. Without the port's incentives, "my cash flow cannot support these start-up costs, and I fear we may not survive these ugly financial times," he said.

Experts said that the hiccups in the Clean Trucks Program might be only the first in a series of unanticipated problems that will result from the biggest and most controversial effort any seaport has made to clean the air. Other ports are also pursuing green goals -- such as the Northwest Ports Clean Air Strategy in Vancouver, Canada; Seattle and Tacoma, Wash. -- but nothing on the scale of that in Southern California.

"Everything you are seeing in Los Angeles and Long Beach you will see happening at every other port around the nation as they attempt to clean up their acts," said John Husing of consulting firm Economics & Politics Inc., an expert on goods movement. "But because they are the biggest, the busiest and most important ports, Los Angeles and Long Beach get to go first. They get to turn over all of the stones and find all the creepy crawly things hiding underneath."

Los Angeles and Long Beach port officials initially had planned to use an electronic system at terminal gates beginning Oct. 1 to assess a fee of \$70 for every 40-foot container. The fees would be used to help finance the purchase of newer, cleaner trucks. Los Angeles came up with the additional incentive of \$20,000 for each of the cleanest trucks and exempted them from the \$70 container fee.

But the fees were blocked by the Federal Maritime Commission, which also has filed a federal lawsuit against parts of the clean-truck plan and has claimed that the ports have overreached their authority and are interfering with interstate commerce.

The commissioners have repeatedly made requests for more information from the ports, and each request begins a new 45-day period in which the ports are blocked from charging the fees.

In addition, the ports have been told not to count on the state for funding, given the swelling budget deficit.

Growing concern from La Rosa, Wang, Griley and seven other trucking company executives who had, in total, purchased \$126.5 million in new trucks convinced port officials that their reputation was on the line. The worst thing they could do was tell the trucking companies that they would have to wait until they were able to collect the fees meant to fund the program.

"The impact on large companies that maintain fleets of several thousand trucks would not have been fatal," said John Holmes, deputy director of operations for the Port of Los Angeles, "but all some of the smaller companies do is drayage in and out of the ports. They have spent a lot of money procuring new trucks. If they don't get these incentives, particularly in this economy, they will be exposed."

Officials at both ports have decided to begin collecting the fees next month and are hoping that federal officials won't try to thwart them again.

"The fee collection is essential to fully realize the environmental benefits of the program," said Richard Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach. Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Geraldine Knatz echoed that sentiment, saying: "It's imperative that we start the program."

With 2009 shaping up as an even slower year for trade at the ports than 2008 was, port officials are hoping that the Obama administration will fill the two vacancies at the five-member Federal Maritime Commission with appointees who are sympathetic to their efforts. But with so much more on the new administration's plate than the ports, it's not clear when or whether that will happen.

"We have to do everything we can to keep the clean-truck program going and everything we can to collect the fees for these incentives," Holmes said.

La Rosa is happy that some of the money is on the way. But even with the \$20,000-a-truck incentive, he says it won't be easy to pay off and maintain the new fleet.

"Our business is down across the board from between 20% to 30% because of the economy. Our earnings have plummeted," La Rosa said.

"We are heavily committed to this clean-air program. We want this to work."

Tough California air rules to force new era for cars?

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

President Barack Obama's directive to reconsider California's attempt to regulate global warming gases from automobiles could bring many more highly fuel-efficient cars to sales lots as early as this year.

Auto manufacturers can achieve the bulk of required emission reductions using technology available today, without sacrificing the design or size of the vehicle, state air pollution regulators and environmental advocates say.

Some of the fuel-saving features are in models already on the road, such as more efficient valve-timing, sleeker aerodynamics and smoother-rolling tires. The added production cost would be about \$1,800 per vehicle, they say.

"Everyone who has tracked the development of automobile technologies knows that the entire industry can do much more to reduce emissions and improve fuel efficiency," said Tim Carmichael, senior policy adviser with the environmentalist Coalition for Clean Air.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and environmental leaders said they are confident the Obama administration soon will grant California the authority it needs to shift its landmark regulation of global warming vehicle emissions out of neutral.

The optimism springs from Obama's announcement Monday directing the federal Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider a request by California and 13 other states to enforce tailpipe limits on climate-warming exhausts.

If newly appointed EPA administrator Lisa Jackson gives the go-ahead, automakers for the first time would be required to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases, starting this year.

The only practical way automakers can do that is to make cars run more efficiently and burn less fuel.

Granting the states' request would mean that about half the country's new-car market would come under tough new emissions requirements. California is joined in its federal plea by some populous states including New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Oregon and Washington.

California is the only state permitted under the federal Clean Air Act to set its own, tougher rules on auto emissions and fuels. Other states, however, can adopt the California standards.

In the absence of federal regulation, California in 2002 mandated that automakers limit global-warming emissions from new cars and passenger trucks. But it needed the EPA's permission to enforce it.

After several years' delay and a lawsuit by the petitioning states, the Bush administration's EPA rejected the California standard, saying in late 2007 that recently adopted federal mileage rules made the action unnecessary.

"For too long Washington has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to the environment," Schwarzenegger said Monday, sharing a Capitol news conference stage with gleeful representatives of environmental groups. "Now California finally has a partner and an ally in Washington, at the White House."

The emissions law, Assembly Bill 1493 authored by then-Assemblywoman Fran Pavley, is expected to result in 22 percent fewer emissions of carbon dioxide by 2012 and a 30 percent reduction by 2016, compared with 2002 model cars, according to the state Air Resources Board, which regulates the law.

Cutting motor vehicle emissions of carbon dioxide would account for nearly 20 percent of the greenhouse gas reductions required by California's other global warming law, AB 32, which Schwarzenegger signed in 2006.

While the technology to meet the stricter limits already exists in many late-model cars on the road today, the California regulation could spur the introduction of new technology such as plug-in electric hybrids, which would allow consumers to recharge the vehicles' batteries at home.

The automobile industry at every step has blocked the California standard from becoming effective, saying the waiver would require it to produce two sets of vehicles, one that would meet the California standard and another that could be sold elsewhere.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers muted its opposition Monday. Its president, Dave McCurdy, said: "We are ready to work with the administration on developing a national approach."

Schwarzenegger said California actually did a favor for the financially crippled automakers by winning President Obama's ear on stricter greenhouse gas emissions.

"This has absolutely nothing to do (with) punishing the automakers," Schwarzenegger said. "What we wanted to do is just give them a little push to be innovative and to develop new techniques that will ultimately make better cars that will be more competitive around the world."

The governor and environmentalists said federal approval of the California regulation would lead the EPA to adopt the measure nationwide.

California has been setting the nation's pace for vehicle emissions controls for more than 40 years. Each time the state set or tightened its standards for tailpipe pollutants, the federal government followed course.

Report: Growth in green jobs, energy efficiency in state Clean tech investment, number of patents issued and hybrid vehicles cited

By Matt Nauman - San Jose Mercury News

In the Modesto Bee, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

California added green jobs in recent years at a much more rapid pace than nongreen jobs, a report released today says.

From 2005 to 2007, the number of green jobs grew 10 percent to about 105,000 in the state, according to the 2009 California Green Innovation Index. During the same period, statewide job growth was about 1 percent.

A surprising number of the green jobs -- 20 percent -- were in manufacturing, the report notes, with the growth spread fairly evenly across diverse segments of clean technology, including advanced materials, transportation, air and environment, and green building.

From 1995 to 2007, the number of green jobs in California grew 15 percent and the number of green businesses increased 28 percent.

Green jobs are defined as those that provide products and services using renewable energy resources, reducing pollution, conserving energy and natural resources, and putting waste to new uses.

The data snapshot, however, ends in early 2007, which means that the turbulent economy that became the recession of 2008 and continues into 2009 isn't reflected in these numbers.

The report was issued by Next 10, a Palo Alto nonprofit that focuses on the intersection of the economy and the environment. It was founded and funded by F. Noel Perry, a former venture capitalist. The research was conducted by Collaborative Economics of Mountain View.

Some other highlights of the report:

Energy productivity, which researchers define as total gross domestic product produced per unit of energy, is 68 percent higher in California than in the rest of the United States. In 2006,

California created \$2.17 of GDP for every 10,000 British thermal units of energy consumed, compared with \$1.29 of GDP for every 10,000 Btu of energy consumed in the rest of the nation.

That's important, Perry said. It shows that energy efficiency doesn't have to inhibit economic growth.

From 2002 to 2007, California was the leader in patent registrations for green technologies, especially in the fields of solar energy, fuel cells and batteries.

A Field Poll commissioned as part of the research shows that a vast majority of Californians believe global warming is a serious threat to the state's economy (69 percent) and its quality of life (73 percent).

The \$3.3 billion in venture investments in California clean-tech companies in 2008 was 57 percent of the total U.S. investment in the segment. Silicon Valley companies got \$1.8 billion. Most of the money -- 69 percent -- went to energy generation projects; 8 percent went to transportation.

Registrations of alternative-fuel vehicles, including hybrids and those running on electricity or natural gas, topped 100,000 in California for the first time in 2007. That's more than 2 percent of the state's car registrations.

As the Obama administration moves to use energy efficiency and renewable energy as a source of job growth, California could be an exporter of its expertise to other states, Perry said.

Tracey Grose, a Collaborative Economics vice president, noted that many calculations of the number of green jobs rely on modeling or existing job categories, and neither results in an accurate accounting.

Her firm relied on a many sources, including a sophisticated Internet search for data, to reach its conclusions.

California Scores Vindication, Environmental Win

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In the N.Y. Time, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) -- California was handed a big environmental victory when President Barack Obama endorsed a key part of the state's greenhouse gas reduction plan.

He also gave a public boost to the Golden State, offering a clear sign that liberal-leaning California can expect a friendly relationship with his administration after eight years of clashes with former President George W. Bush. "California has shown bold and bipartisan leadership through its effort to forge 21st century standards, and over a dozen states have followed its lead," Obama said Monday.

The compliment came as the president announced that his team would revisit the Bush administration's decision to deny California permission to control tailpipe emissions.

Obama's announcement on his seventh day in office delighted California officials who have criticized his predecessor for ignoring the state's long tradition of setting its own air standards.

"For too long, Washington has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to the environment," Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said. "Now California finally has a partner and an ally in Washington, in the White House."

Because California began regulating vehicle pollution before the federal government did, the state has special status under the Clean Air Act to implement tougher emission standards than those promulgated by the federal government.

But the state must first get a waiver from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. California was granted about 50 such waivers -- and never denied -- before seeking a waiver in 2005 to implement a landmark state law that would force automakers to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent in new cars and light trucks by 2016.

The auto regulations were to have been a major part of California's first-in-the-nation global warming law that aims to reduce greenhouse gases economy-wide by 25 percent -- to 1990 levels -- by 2020. Air regulators are counting on the auto emission reductions to meet about 18 percent of the state's proposed reductions.

If California is granted an emissions waiver, other states can then choose to adopt California's standards or go with the federal ones. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia were ready to implement the

California standards when, after months of delay and controversy, then-EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson announced in December 2007 that he was denying the waiver.

That sparked outrage, investigations and lawsuits from California officials. Congressional investigations led by Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, found that Johnson had overruled the unanimous recommendations of career scientists at the agency.

Boxer said Obama's order was "a vindication for common sense."

Although Obama's directive to his new EPA administrator Lisa Jackson -- who began her first week on the job Monday -- doesn't amount to giving the state the waiver, California officials were confident that would be the eventual outcome.

Obama's move was also cheered in Washington state, where Gov. Chris Gregoire signed that state's similar tailpipe standards into law in 2005.

"This decision will help protect the planet as we work with the federal government to tackle one of our most pressing environmental problems," Gregoire said. "Making investments now to protect our health and environment will cost us far less in the long run."

Sen. Ed Murray, D-Seattle, said he was happy that Washington state may soon be able to move forward with the law.

"What a difference a president makes," he said. "What's unfortunate is that if we moved quicker, not just as states, but as a nation, we might already be selling cars that people actually want to buy."

Emissions rule waiver expected this spring

Matthew Yi, Wyatt Buchanan, Chronicle Sacramento Bureau
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Sacramento -- California officials say they plan to enforce the state's regulation requiring the nation's most fuel-efficient vehicles as soon as the federal government grants the state a waiver from less-stringent national standards.

The move is expected this spring.

The regulation would have the single largest impact on the state's ambitious goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2020 under the landmark legislation AB32.

Delayed by the Bush administration since 2005, the rule would require automakers to produce vehicles that cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2016, resulting in an average vehicle fuel-efficiency of 35.7 miles per gallon - far higher than the current federal standard of 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.3 mpg for SUVs and light trucks.

The rule would have wide-ranging impact on the types of cars, minivans, SUVs and trucks that consumers will see in California dealerships.

President Obama ordered his environmental officials on Monday to immediately review California's regulation, strongly hinting that he would like to allow the state and 13 others to move forward with stricter emissions standards. The federal government, under former President Bush, refused to grant the waiver in 2007 after two years of deliberation.

"The president's action is a great victory for California and for cleaning the air around the nation for generations to come," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said at a state Capitol news conference. "Soon millions of Americans will be able to breathe easier and drive more fuel-efficient cars."

Automobile manufacturers, who have been lobbying heavily against the federal waiver, declined to criticize Obama's decision but argued that a nationwide standard is a better approach than allowing individual states to have separate vehicle-emissions standards.

"We are ready to work with the administration on developing a national approach," said Dave McCurdy, president and CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. The organization represents 11 manufacturers, including Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Mazda and Toyota.

Environmental groups applauded the president's decision.

"What a difference an election makes," said Bernadette De Chiaro, a lobbyist for Environment California, a lobby group. "For the past eight years, America's engine for ingenuity and progress on the environment was stuck in reverse under the Bush administration. And today, President Obama has taken America from zero to 60 in six days."

Linda Adams, secretary of California's state Environmental Protection Agency, said she expects federal EPA officials to grant the waiver in the spring and the state to implement the new regulation immediately. The new rule would cover current 2009 model automobiles, some of which began appearing in dealerships in the fall.

Adams and state air board officials said they believe automakers should be able to meet the requirements of the new rule for this year's vehicles because automakers were alerted that the 2009-model engines would come under the new regulation within 45 days if a federal waiver were granted.

In addition, state officials believe most automakers have begun using many of the technologies that would make vehicles more fuel efficient, placing them on track to meet the requirements of the new rule.

Automakers would be required to annually report emissions figures on their vehicles to be sold in California, but the final determination of whether each company has met the requirements won't occur until 2016, said

Tom Cackette, deputy director of the California Air Resources Board.

Edward B. Cohen, vice president of governmental and industry relations for Honda, said that if the new standards are adopted, "every single component of the vehicle is going to have to be examined to make sure the vehicle is more fuel-efficient." That will mean continued technological improvements on car engines as well as using lighter-weight steel, he said.

But state officials said automakers already have begun to use proven technologies to improve fuel efficiency. For example, the Honda Odyssey minivan's engine shuts down certain cylinders when cruising at high speeds on freeways, and Volkswagen's smaller, gas-sipping engines compensate for lower power by adding a turbo-charge, said Stanley Young, a spokesman for the state air board.

And while adding more hybrids and electric vehicles to the fleet would certainly help, automakers should be able to meet the requirements of the new regulation mostly by adopting smaller design changes in traditional, gas-powered automobiles, Young said.

But consumers are likely to have to pay higher prices on new vehicles, and dealers might not carry some automobiles in California, said Peter Welch, President and CEO of the California New Car Dealers Association. Welch added that higher prices could drive car-shoppers to purchase older vehicles that pollute more.

"You can mandate the manufacturer to make them, but you can't mandate that consumers buy them," he said.

Welch said California consumers also might be compelled to leave the state to buy cars.

"There's nothing stopping someone from San Francisco or Sacramento to drive to Reno to buy one," he said. That would end up hurting state and local governments, which collect sales taxes. New car sales have declined significantly, by 23 percent between 2007 and 2008, Welch said.

But state officials said the state's emissions rule would simply encourage automakers to innovate.

"This will result in better-engineered cars that use off-the-shelf technologies that are already available to get the reductions in emissions," Young said.

Cutting state's vehicle emissions

How California would regulate automakers if federal officials allow it to enforce the nation's strictest emissions rules:

New vehicles sold in California would have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2016, resulting in an average vehicle fuel-efficiency of 35.7 miles per gallon. Federal fuel-efficiency standards are 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.3 mpg for light trucks.

Source: California Air Resources Board, Chronicle Research.

Obama orders push to cleaner, more efficient cars

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama opened an ambitious, double-barreled assault on global warming and U.S. energy woes Monday, moving quickly toward rules requiring cleaner-running cars that guzzle less gas - a must, he said, for "our security, our economy and our planet."

He also vowed to succeed where a long line of predecessors had failed in slowing U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Starting his second week in office, Obama took a major step toward allowing California and other states to target greenhouse gases through more stringent auto emission standards, and he ordered new federal rules directing automakers to start making more fuel-efficient cars as required by law.

The auto industry responded warily. Reducing planet-warming emissions is a great idea, carmakers and dealers said, but they expressed deep concern about costly regulations and conflicting state and federal rules at a time when people already are not buying cars. U.S. auto sales plunged 18 percent in 2008.

And industry analysts said the changes could cost consumers thousands of dollars - for smaller, "greener" cars.

Obama on Monday directed the Environmental Protection Agency to review whether California and more than a dozen states should be allowed to impose tougher auto emission standards on carmakers to fight greenhouse gas emissions. The Bush administration had blocked the efforts by the states, which account for about half of the nation's auto sales.

The new president also said his administration would issue new fuel-efficiency requirements to cover 2011 model year vehicles.

Obama acknowledged the worries of automakers but said urgent action was needed nonetheless. He said, "Our goal is not to further burden an already struggling industry. It is to help America's automakers prepare for the future."

He said that U.S. imports of foreign oil have continued to climb, even as previous presidents pledged to reverse the trend. No more, he said.

"I want to be clear from the beginning of this administration that we have made our choice: America will not be held hostage to dwindling resources, hostile regimes and a warming planet,"

Obama said in the ornate East Room of the White House, where an audience of environmentalists cheered him on.

Underscoring environmental worries, a new report said many damaging effects of climate change are already all but irreversible, sure to last until the year 3000 and beyond. "It's not like air pollution where if we turn off a smokestack, in a few days the air is clear," said Susan Solomon, chief author of the international report and a climate researcher with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colo.

Showing the early limits of bipartisanship, House Republican leader John Boehner said Obama's reopening of a key California ruling was dangerous. "The effect of this policy will be to destroy American jobs at the very time government leaders should be working together to protect and create them," he said.

Obama's order for an EPA review of California's case could shake up the auto industry - 13 other states and the District of Columbia have adopted California's standards, and others are considering them. If California gets a federal waiver to enact tougher emissions standards, the other states could then sign on.

Also, Obama directed federal transportation officials to get going on new fuel efficiency rules, which will affect cars produced and sold for the 2011 model year. That step was needed to enforce a 2007 energy law, which calls for cars and trucks to be more efficient every year, to at least 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Obama also meant to set a tone with his promises: Science will trump ideology and special interests, attention will stay high even when gas prices fall.

It was a none-too-subtle admonishing of previous administrations, chiefly George W. Bush's.

"It falls on us to choose whether to risk the peril that comes with our current course or to seize the promise of energy independence," Obama said. "And for the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and the commitment to change."

Obama put that peril he mentioned in stark terms. He said dependence on foreign oil "bankrolls dictators, pays for nuclear proliferation and funds both sides of our struggle against terrorism. It puts the American people at the mercy of shifting gas prices, stifles innovation and sets back our ability to compete."

Recent presidential history is littered with grand but broken promises about weaning a gas-guzzling country from foreign oil. As long ago as 1973, Richard Nixon wanted the nation to be energy independent by 1980. The U.S. now imports even a bigger share of its oil than it did then.

This time could be different, said Phyllis Cuttino, director of a global warming campaign for the Pew Environment Group.

"It is very telling that at a time when he's working feverishly to pass an \$825 billion stimulus package, he took these concrete steps on day six," she said. "That speaks volumes to his commitment." Environmental advocates, she added, are "all going to be applauding him - and holding his feet to the fire."

Underscoring Obama's attempt to shore up America's environmental credentials, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on Monday appointed a special envoy for climate change.

Going back to Nixon's time, the U.S. imported 36 percent of its oil and refined products, about half coming from the OPEC cartel. During the first 11 months of 2008, imports accounted for nearly 67 percent of the petroleum used each day in the U.S., according to the Energy Information Administration.

Robert Ebel, an authority on energy policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said public sentiment about the new promises may be, "Here we go again." But Obama, given his

popularity, a cooperative leadership on Congress and the nation's desire for a reshaped economy, could have a window.

"The memory of \$4 a gallon gasoline is not that old, and the financial crisis is very much in people's minds," he said. "All these things put together will help." Obama framed his energy plan as steady and pragmatic. Sounding much like President Bush did, he warned that there is no quick fix.

Obama considers regulating greenhouse gases

By DINA CAPIELLO, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, L.A. Daily News and other papers, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Barack Obama's push for cleaner-running automobiles is being viewed as the clearest signal yet that he intends to regulate greenhouse gases.

In an ambitious assault on global warming, Obama on Monday directed the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider previous denials of applications by states wanting to set their own limits on the amount of greenhouse gases allowed in truck and car exhaust.

For a decade, environmentalists and states have urged the federal government to limit tailpipe emissions — mostly carbon dioxide — that are blamed for global warming.

For almost as long, the Bush administration refused to use existing law to control greenhouse gases, despite increasing scientific evidence that the Earth is warming and court rulings that said the government has the authority to act.

Should the EPA grant California, 16 states and the District of Columbia permission to set a standard for reducing greenhouse gases from automobiles, experts say federal regulations will soon follow, then limits will be ordered for emissions from refineries and industrial plants.

"There is little question that this is heading in the direction of federal regulation of carbon dioxide," said Michael Gerrard, director of the Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University in New York City.

Greenhouse gases from automobiles currently are not regulated by the federal government, and the Bush administration opposed state efforts to set restrictions, despite requests dating back to 1999.

The Bush administration instead focused on improvements to fuel economy as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, since cars and trucks burning less fuel would generate less pollution.

On Monday, in a separate action, Obama directed the Transportation Department to set new fuel economy standards for 2011 model-year automobiles.

Both actions will reduce greenhouse gases but could put the states and the federal government on slightly different courses.

The federal Clean Air Act has always allowed states to set stricter standards than the federal government for refineries, factories and other stationary sources of pollution. However, it bars states from setting more stringent pollution standards for motor vehicles because of the problems it might cause automakers.

California's standard, which requires a waiver from the EPA under the Clean Air Act, would require SUVs, minivans and cars starting in model year 2009 to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases by 30 percent by 2016. To achieve the reductions, the fleetwide average for the state would have to be 35.7 miles per gallon by 2016, and 42.5 miles per gallon in 2020.

The 2007 energy bill signed into law by President George W. Bush set a 35 miles per gallon fuel economy target by 2020.

Industry representatives said if EPA grants the waiver it would trigger the agency to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. The Bush administration refused to use the law, saying it was the wrong tool to address global warming and would cripple the economy.

"Such a move would put the EPA one step closer to making carbon dioxide 'subject to regulation' under the Act," said William Kovacs, vice president of environment, technology and regulatory affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "This would almost certainly extend well beyond cars and trucks."

Sixteen states and the District of Columbia already have adopted or are considering adopting California's standards. The states are Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Utah and Colorado.

Even if most of these states adopt the California standard, it will reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by about 3 percent and worldwide greenhouse gas emissions by only 0.6 percent, according to a 2007 report by the Congressional Research Service.

Environmentalists already are pressing the EPA to regulate greenhouse gases on other fronts, including emissions from ships and off-road vehicles, such as ATVs and snowmobiles.

Some climate damage already irreversible

By Randolph E. Schmid, The Associated Press

L.A. Daily News, Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

WASHINGTON - Many damaging effects of climate change are already basically irreversible, researchers declared Monday, warning that even if carbon emissions can somehow be halted temperatures around the globe will remain high until at least the year 3000.

"People have imagined that if we stopped emitting carbon dioxide the climate would go back to normal in 100 years, 200 years; that's not true," climate researcher Susan Solomon said in a teleconference.

Solomon, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colo., is lead author of an international team's paper reporting irreversible damage from climate change, being published in Tuesday's edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

She defines "irreversible" as change that would remain for 1,000 years even if humans stopped adding carbon to the atmosphere immediately.

The findings were announced as President Barack Obama ordered reviews that could lead to greater fuel efficiency and cleaner air, saying the Earth's future depends on cutting air pollution.

Said Solomon, "Climate change is slow, but it is unstoppable" - all the more reason to act quickly, so the long-term situation doesn't get even worse.

Alan Robock, of the Center for Environmental Prediction at Rutgers University, agreed with the report's assessment.

"It's not like air pollution where if we turn off a smokestack, in a few days the air is clear," said Robock, who was not part of Solomon's research team. "It means we have to try even harder to reduce emissions," he said in a telephone interview.

Solomon's report "is quite important, not alarmist, and very important for the current debates on climate policy," added Jonathan Overpeck, a climate researcher at the University of Arizona.

In her paper Solomon, a leader of the International Panel on Climate Change and one of the world's best known researchers on the subject, noted that temperatures around the globe have risen and changes in rainfall patterns have been observed in areas around the Mediterranean, southern Africa and southwestern North America.

Warmer climate also is causing expansion of the ocean, and that is expected to increase with the melting of ice on Greenland and Antarctica, the researchers said.

"I don't think that the very long time scale of the persistence of these effects has been understood," Solomon said.

Global warming has been slowed by the ocean, Solomon said, because water absorbs a lot of energy to warm up. But that good effect will not only wane over time, the ocean will help keep the planet warmer by giving off its accumulated heat to the air.

Climate change has been driven by gases in the atmosphere that trap heat from solar radiation and raise the planet's temperature - the "greenhouse effect." Carbon dioxide has been the most important of those gases because it remains in the air for hundreds of years. While other gases are responsible for nearly half of the warming, they degrade more rapidly, Solomon said.

Before the industrial revolution the air contained about 280 parts per million of carbon dioxide. That has risen to 385 ppm today, and politicians and scientists have debated at what level it could be stabilized.

Solomon's paper concludes that if CO₂ is allowed to peak at 450-600 parts per million, the results would include persistent decreases in dry-season rainfall that are comparable to the 1930s North American Dust Bowl in zones including southern Europe, northern Africa, southwestern North America, southern Africa and western Australia.

Gerald Meehl, a senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said, "The real concern is that the longer we wait to do something, the higher the level of irreversible climate change to which we'll have to adapt." Meehl was not part of Solomon's research team.

While scientists have been aware of the long-term aspects of climate change, the new report highlights and provides more specifics on them, said Kevin Trenberth, head of climate analysis at the center.

"This aspect is one that is poorly appreciated by policymakers and the general public and it is real," said Trenberth, who was not part of the research group.

"The temperature changes and the sea level changes are, if anything underestimated and quite conservative, especially for sea level," he said.

While he agreed that the rainfall changes mentioned in the paper are under way, Trenberth disagreed with some details of that part of the report.

"Even so, there would be changes in snow (to rain), snow pack and water resources, and irreversible consequences even if not quite the way the authors describe," he said. "The policy relevance is clear: We need to act sooner ... because by the time the public and policymakers really realize the changes are here it is far too late to do anything about it. In fact, as the authors point out, it is already too late for some effects."

Co-authors of the paper were Gian-Kaspar Plattner and Reto Knutti of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and Pierre Friedlingstein of the National Institute for Scientific Research, Gif sur Yvette, France.

The research was supported by the Office of Science at the Department of Energy.

On the Net:

PNAS: <http://www.pnas.org>

Environmentalists sound alarms over budget deal

By Kevin Yamamura

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

While Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger celebrated President Obama's embrace of California's strict auto emissions standards, environmentalists said Monday they fear the governor and Democrats will approve GOP environmental rollbacks in exchange for tax increases.

Republican leaders have asked to relax diesel equipment rules, protect developers from greenhouse-gas lawsuits and give the governor's Business, Transportation and Housing secretary oversight in future California Air Resources Board decisions.

Environmentalists said the changes have little to do with the state's estimated \$40 billion budget deficit. State leaders are trying to reach a compromise within seven to 10 days, Schwarzenegger said Monday, in order to ensure that California has enough cash to pay its bills.

Democrats generally have pursued a basic trade of spending cuts for tax increases. But Schwarzenegger and Republican leaders have demanded proposals that help businesses, on top of budget cuts, in exchange for supporting new taxes. Environmentalists are concerned because bill language began circulating last week ahead of a possible budget vote.

"Republicans are trying to use their budget leverage to achieve weakenings of environmental laws they could never achieve through the normal budget process," said Sierra Club California Director Bill Magavern. "We urge the legislative leaders and the governor not to acquiesce to this fiscal blackmail."

Republicans said their demands, some of which they aired publicly in December, would provide crucial relief to businesses in the state's economic downturn and are relevant because budget woes are economy-driven.

"It's about creating a job environment that's conducive to putting people to work and keeping them in good-paying jobs in this state, which we think is imperative right now with the economy doing what it's doing," said Senate Republican Leader Dave Cogdill, R-Modesto.

GOP leaders have asked for changes in environmental laws before, but they have significant leverage this year because leaders are desperate to reach a budget deal soon, which requires Republican votes. The few Republicans who have discussed breaking their no-new-tax pledge said they want relief for businesses and a cap on future state spending.

One proposal would allow farmers in the Central Valley and in certain coastal areas to use more pesticides than allowed under a court-authorized agreement the state made last year. Cogdill said the request involves "clarifying a court decision."

But environmentalists see it as an attempt to circumvent the judicial system.

"It's certainly an effort to water down what was achieved in the courts," said Brent Newell of the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment and the lead counsel representing local residents who challenged the state. "My clients had to go to court to make sure the state kept its promises ... now the Republicans are trying to gut it."

Officials at the California attorney general's office have grown concerned about a GOP proposal to protect developers and other builders from litigation related to the state's 2006 greenhouse-gas reduction law, according to an internal memo. They also questioned a plan to give the Business, Transportation and Housing secretary power to analyze major air-board regulations for business impacts.

Another change would relieve construction firms and other businesses from having to meet a 2007 retrofit requirement for diesel off-road vehicles. Mike Lewis, senior vice president for the Construction Industry Air Quality Coalition, said contractors already have reduced emissions below targeted levels because the economic slowdown has reduced activity and firms have begun complying with new rules.

Under the air-board requirement, he said businesses would have to pay \$1 billion to retrofit 35,000 particulate traps by next year: "The industry simply doesn't have a billion to do that."

Budget talks between Schwarzenegger and Democrats blew up during the holiday break in part because they disagreed over the governor's plan to waive environmental restrictions for specific highway projects.

Schwarzenegger said that he would not comment on specific proposals and that some "radical" ideas have been discussed. But he said, "We do not want to harm the environment. We want to always protect the environment."

Democratic Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, said Monday that he would not comment on current negotiations, "but I believe very strongly that economic development and environmental protection go together. They're not mutually exclusive."

Kathryn Phillips, director of California transportation and air initiatives for the Environmental Defense Fund, said she is concerned because Democrats have consistently said "everything is on the table."

"My feeling is they shouldn't be putting public health protections already adopted on the table," Phillips said. "At some point, someone ought to stand up and say let's only put fiscal issues on the table."

Old TVs cause new problems

By Elizabeth Weise

USA TODAY, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

EL CERRITO, Calif. — When the hatch popped open on Louis Cornelius' SUV, there were four TVs piled up in the back, all destined for recycling. "My wife wanted to be up to date on the electronics," he says.

Sumiko Flodin's 35-year-old TV "still works," but she bought a new 19-inch set at Best Buy and wanted to empty out her living room. "I don't like the idea of having all this stuff hanging around."

When Virginia Ritchie decided to clear out her old TVs, she loaded up the big one that didn't work anymore, "and then I found three TVs in the basement to get rid of."

For each of them, and most of the 300 or so people who came to an "electronic waste recycling event" on a chilly Saturday here, the motivation was simple: cleaning up. But for the Environmental Protection Agency and activists worried about soil, water and air pollution, it's more complicated.

Televisions carelessly disposed of can be toxic to the environment. A huge backlog of unused old ones (99.1 million, the EPA says) is sitting around in people's homes.

And later this year — either on Feb. 17 or on June 12 if Congress passes a delay — the USA will switch from analog to digital TV transmission. The number of unwanted TVs will go even higher as consumers upgrade to sets capable of receiving high-definition broadcasts.

Though a TV set is benign in the living room, it's not when it is broken up to reach the reusable materials inside. There's a lot of lead, a bit of barium, cadmium, chromium, traces of gold and even mercury in the lamps on some flat screens.

The best way to deal with them is not to throw them away at all but to keep using them, says John Cross of EPA's Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery. Buying a converter box or getting cable or satellite TV will keep a TV useful for years. But if TVs are discarded, the federal agency wants to make sure the materials in them are recycled.

The problem, according to a Government Accountability Office report last year, is that the EPA's "enforcement is lacking." That has left most of the regulatory work up to the states, only some of which license and audit recycling companies.

The GAO report found that although some electronics are handled responsibly, "a substantial quantity ends up in countries where disposal practices are unsafe to workers and dangerous to the environment." Barbara Kyle of the San Francisco-based Electronics TakeBack Coalition puts that quantity at close to 90%.

EPA environmental scientist Robert Tonetti says it's not that bad: "There are hundreds of honorable recyclers in the United States, and some scoundrels."

Taking the set apart

Under EPA rules, cathode-ray tube TVs — anything that's not flat screen — aren't supposed to be put into landfills, but households are exempt. It's also illegal to export them for recycling unless the destination country agrees and the EPA has been notified. But the GAO found that recycling companies routinely circumvent the rule.

Six states have passed laws making it illegal to throw a TV away, and another five are expected to do so in 2010, Kyle says. Eighteen states, as well as New York City, have ordered electronic recycling programs. But "not all the laws include televisions, which in the year of digital conversion is unfortunate," Kyle says.

Jacob Cherry, a third-generation recycler and CEO of Universal Waste Management, the Oakland company that organized the collection event, says he has seen "people just putting their television in a big black plastic bag so they wouldn't get caught."

At the El Cerrito event, collection coordinator Enrique Aparicio had a crew of seven lined up in the parking lot, ready to swarm over each car, truck and SUV as it passed from sign-in station to drop-off point.

At the company's warehouse in Oakland, Cherry's staff dismantles everything down to its constituent pieces for shipping to processors. Cesar Garcia, a dismantler, lines them up on a long metal table. He first uses an electric screwdriver to unfasten the plastic housing. Sometimes it takes a few whacks with a hammer to loosen the really old ones.

Next he pulls out a pair of wire snips and clips all the cords, which go into a waiting bin to be relieved of their copper later. Now comes the fun part: breaking the vacuum seal on the cathode ray tube. "If you don't, when you drop one of these, it goes off like a bomb," Cherry says.

Garcia takes an awl and a hammer and carefully positions it in the hole left when the air was sucked out of the tube when it was made. A quick tap releases the vacuum. The back portion of the tube, called the funnel, has a thick layer of lead paint, about 5 to 7 pounds worth. It and the screen go to Mexico, where they are crushed, the lead recovered and the glass melted down for reuse in new cathode-ray tubes.

The yoke at the back is pulled out and the copper wire recovered. Then comes the "big bad guy" in the industry, the TV's circuit board. "This has some valuable materials in it, and also some that can be toxic," Cherry says. Here's where recycling can get less than green.

Recycling can be done quick and dirty to get the valuable metals. That's what happens when companies refine "the old-fashioned way," in Cherry's words.

"You throw it in a big vat of acid, and it effectively melts all of the different materials and you're left with metals and sludge." The metals are sold, the sludge is waste. "Oftentimes, when that vat of acid is spent, it's literally dumped," soaking into the ground and polluting the water table, Cherry says.

'Toxic fog'

"The old-fashioned way" is frequently how workshops in developing nations recover resalable materials in TVs and computers. According to the Basel Convention, an outgrowth of the United Nations' environmental program, when old TVs and electronics are shipped to China, India and Africa, their precious and recyclable metals are recovered in ways that are environmentally hazardous, poisoning workers, the air and the land. Environmentalists and activists want Congress to make exporting such e-waste illegal.

"In a place like China, the recycling of copper wire is to douse it with kerosene and burn the vinyl off. You create a tremendously toxic fog when you do that," says Robert Houghton, president of the Columbus, Ohio, recycling company Redemtech.

EPA's Cross says it's important to understand that most markets for reused and recycled electronics are outside the USA. "Reuse markets are mainly in less-developed countries," he

says. And though there are certainly "some unscrupulous recyclers and export brokers, these actually handle a small minority of materials."

Materials often end up in developing countries, where labor costs are lower, because recycling doesn't pay for itself here. Redemtech says the cost of recycling the parts of a 19-inch TV set outweighs the benefit by about \$6. States with recycling laws make up some of the difference by requiring electronics producers to run recycling programs or charging electronics producers or buyers a fee to fund them.

Unified Waste Management's Cherry makes money because California pays collectors by the pound for recycled electronics. His materials go to California-certified Xstrata in San Jose, a former copper smelter that now focuses on recycling. But, he notes, "We have buyers that hit us up literally daily. They're from Southeast Asia or African nations like Nigeria, and they offer better prices than we're getting."

Chicken parts as jet fuel? Pond scum? It's possible

By Dan Reed

USA TODAY, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Chickens can't fly very far. But chickens — or the fatty parts left after processing — could be powering jet flights across the country and around the world in the next few years.

Or maybe it'll be algae, essentially pond scum, fueling them. Or jatropha, a smelly and poisonous subtropical plant with nicknames such as "black vomit nut" or "bellyache bush." Or liquid fuel converted from coal or natural gas, using a technology pioneered by Adolph Hitler's Nazi war machine.

Airlines, airplane and engine makers, the fledgling synthetic and biofuels industry, the U.S. government, environmentalists and even the big oil companies are working together to develop alternative fuels from these and other sources. Their goal: to replace a significant portion of the 19 billion gallons of kerosene that U.S. carriers burn in their planes each year and to do it by the end of the next decade. If they succeed, airlines will reduce their carbon footprint — and save big money that could possibly help hold down fares.

The U.S. Air Force also is pushing development. By next year, it wants all of its planes certified to operate on a 50/50 mix of conventional jet fuel, known as Jet A, and alternative fuel. Air Force generals don't want their planes grounded by a geopolitical event that pushes oil prices through the stratosphere or stops the flow of foreign oil.

The alternative fuel industry only now is beginning to move beyond the research-and-development stage into commercialization. Yet, enough progress is being made that it's safe to say it won't be long before Air Force pilots and commercial travelers will be flying in planes powered, in part or entirely, by synthetic or biofuels.

"We're looking at five-year time horizons, not 20-year time horizons," says Continental Airlines CEO Larry Kellner. "This isn't going to happen in 2010, but it needs to happen before 2020."

The International Air Transport Association, the trade group for airlines around the world, has a goal of replacing a quarter of airlines' oil-based fuel consumption with bio or synthetic alternatives by 2025 and a third of it by 2030.

Earlier this month, Continental took a Boeing 737 up for the USA's first test flight of a jet burning a mixture of conventional jet fuel and biofuels. The test featured a 50/50 mix of Jet A and a biofuel in one engine. It was the fourth such test in the world in the last 12 months. It was the first using a plane with just two engines, and the first in which the alternative fuel was partially derived from algae. On Jan. 30, Japan Airlines will send up a jet using fuel that includes camelina, a weed sometimes called "false flax."

In touting their test flights, Kellner and other airline executives emphasize they're doing their part to address climate change by reducing the carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and particulates discharged from their jet engines.

Burning biofuel made from plants and even synthetic fuel made from liquefying coal and gas can cut a jet's carbon emissions. Although they emit carbon dioxide when burned, biofuels leave in the atmosphere only what the plants they're made from had absorbed. Synthetics also leave smaller carbon footprints than pure Jet A fuel. They also emit less nitrous oxide and particulate pollutants.

What the airlines don't talk much about is the big money they could save by turning to alternative fuel. Results of the Houston flight are still being evaluated. But Continental test pilot Richard Jankowski reported that during the 80-minute flight, the plane's right engine burned noticeably less fuel than the left, which ran on pure Jet A.

Burning less fuel translates into big dollar savings.

For example, in 2008 the big U.S. airlines burned about 19.6 billion gallons of jet fuel and paid an average price of \$2.98 a gallon for it, according to estimates from the Air Transport Association, the trade group for U.S. carriers. That's nearly \$58 billion spent on fuel. A 5% reduction in fuel burned at last year's prices translates into \$2.9 billion in savings.

How big is that? U.S. airlines have reported net annual profits of \$2.9 billion or more only six times in their history. Even at today's lower, and probably temporary, prices of about \$1.51 a gallon, a 5% reduction in fuel consumption would generate about \$1.5 billion in annual savings.

Biofuels offer other potential savings.

The European Union has pending legislation that would require airlines that fly there to pay through a pollution-allowances trading system if they emit too much greenhouse gas. Continental won't say how much it could save if burning alternative fuels can help it reduce its emissions and avoid paying European penalties. "We really haven't studied that yet," Kellner said before the test flight.

But Barry Cohen, who heads the National Algae Association, a new trade group promoting algae production, says it's plenty. "It's in the hundreds of millions of dollars a year, per carrier, potentially," he says. Such penalties, on top of high fuel prices, threaten airlines' financial survival, he says.

Closer to market

Some alternative jet fuels are closer to market than others. Synthetic fuel already is tested and available. It's been around since the 1930s, when the Nazis began converting coal into gasoline using a method invented by German scientists Franz Fischer and Hans Tropsch. Sasol, a South African company, began producing Fischer-Tropsch synfuels in the 1950s and beefed up production in the 1980s to help the nation cope with trade embargos for its former apartheid policy.

Syntroleum, a firm based in Tulsa, supplied the Air Force with 100,000 gallons of synthetic fuel for flight testing in 2006. Beginning in 2016, the service plans to buy 400 million gallons of it annually — enough to power a quarter of all its domestic U.S. flights in a year.

The biofuel closest to market is animal fat, including that from chickens.

Dynamic Fuels, a partnership between Syntroleum and meat-processing giant Tyson Foods of Arkansas, broke ground in October on a \$138 million refining facility in Geismar, La. The plant will turn chicken fat, beef tallow, pork lard and grease into liquid fuel. It is expected to begin production in 2010 and turn out about 75 million gallons of fuel a year, says Ron Stinebaugh, Syntroleum's senior vice president of finance.

Animal fat isn't the best long-term solution for deriving fuel from a renewable resource, says Jennifer Holmgren, head of the Renewable Energy and Chemicals business at UOP. Now a division of Honeywell, UOP developed most of the chemical processes used in refining today's petroleum fuels. Holmgren's unit is charged with doing the same thing for alternative fuels.

"You aren't going to start raising animals for energy," Holmgren says.

Better options are non-food crops, such as jatropha, camelina and algae, she says. Fuel from jatropha and camelina will be on the market within three to five years, she says. Fuel from algae is eight to 10 years away because research on it began later.

There's not likely to be a single winner among the various alternative fuels that will be adopted for use by all the world's airlines, says Sebastien Remy, head of alternative fuel research for European airplane maker Airbus. "But there will be one specification for the quality of the fuels to come from these various alternative sources," he says. "The engines should not be able to tell the difference between conventional jet fuel and whatever alternative fuels airlines choose to use in the future."

Which fuel is best for an airline may depend on location, he says. In Asia, camelina is abundant. In Australia, Mexico and parts of South America, where conditions for growing jatropha are ideal, it likely will be the primary source of alternative fuels, Remy says. In North America, synthetic fuel may make more sense because coal and natural gas are abundant.

Longer term, algae may be what fuels the engines in U.S. airline jets. It can be produced in high volume, and the USA has plenty of space to grow it.

"Jatropha and other grains will be on the market sooner, but only in the tens or hundreds of millions of gallons," says UOP's Holmgren. "Algae will be produced in the billions of gallons a little bit further down the road."

Algae is among the fastest-growing organisms on Earth. It takes up little space relative to its production capacity. Some strains can go from incubator to harvest in 14 days. And it grows best in brackish water, either in ponds, in a high-tech greenhouse environment known as a bioreactor, or on "algae farms," where nutrient-filled water flows through miles of tubes winding around a few acres of land.

"You get an awful lot of productivity out of 1 acre of algae when compared with 1 acre of just about any other crop," says William Thurmond, a bio-energy researcher affiliated with the National Algae Association.

That kind of large-scale production is necessary to get the cost of algae fuel down enough to compete with conventional fuels. But it's doable, says Cohen of the National Algae Association.

Three years ago, a gallon of algae fuel cost about \$300. Today, it's \$10 to \$20 a gallon. Cohen says the cost of producing unrefined algae crude could be less than \$1 a gallon in a few years as technical problems are solved and as production is ramped up to industrial levels. But that will require significant investment.

Cohen, citing government estimates, says about \$66 billion will be needed to meet demand by 2025. However, he says, that's far less than the \$1 trillion invested in U.S. oil production, refining and distribution infrastructure.

Tim Zenk, vice president at Sapphire Energy, the San Diego start-up that produced the algae fuel used in the Continental flight, says his company's investors are motivated in part by environmental concerns.

But that's not the only reason. Investors led by Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates' Cascade Investments and by the Rockefeller Foundation's venture-capital arm funded Sapphire to the tune of \$100 million because they also think algae production will be a great investment.

"We think we'll get 3,000 gallons (of biocrude) a year per acre," Zenk says. "You're going to see very large scales of production."

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009:](#)

Encourage more biomass facilities

The recent incendiary front page article about agricultural burning probably was designed to nudge Dean Florez into writing another one of his choleric Senate bills that would put yet another unreasonable barrier in the way of valley growers.

Here are the facts that were left out of the article: Trees raised to feed you get sick and die. Growers do not want them to die and employ all tools to keep these trees healthy and productive. Some of them just die or become unproductive and uneconomic. These trees must be removed from the orchards and groves or they will cause problems to the trees around them.

Now, what to do with these trees? They are stacked up and the grower (especially smaller ones) begins a futile effort to have a contractor come to his property and turn the trees into chips, which will then be transported to burn at a biomass plant. The chippers are very large machines that cost very large amounts of money to purchase and maintain. It is just about impossible to beg and cajole a chipper operator to come and shred 150 trees. They are only interested in you if you have 4,000 trees to shred.

So I have 125 trees that I pulled out last month. I'm trying to be a good citizen and not pollute, but what do I do with all these dead trees? Eventually, I will be forced to burn them. I do not have a choice.

If Florez would like to be part of the solution rather than blowing smoke, he would find a way to encourage the proliferation of chipper operators and biomass generators.

DICK PORTER, Bakersfield

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Tuesday, January 27, 2009:](#)

Our View: Obama sides with states

EPA ordered to re-examine tougher auto emission standards that were nixed by Bush.

After less than a week in office, President Barack Obama has moved aggressively to wipe away one of the most noxious anti-environmental policies of the Bush administration.

On Monday, the president ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to re-examine whether California and 13 other states should be allowed to impose tougher auto emission standards to combat global warming.

California clashed repeatedly with the Bush administration over this issue.

The state approved a historic greenhouse gas control measure in 2007 that required cars sold in this state to reduce the amount of planet-warming carbon dioxide they emitted.

The new standards would force car manufacturers to reduce emissions by 30 percent in new cars and trucks sold in California by 2016.

Other states followed California's lead.

But car manufacturers, with the backing of the Bush administration, sued, arguing in court that carbon dioxide was not a pollutant that could be regulated by the Clean Air Act. The courts backed California.

Nonetheless, to impose the new, tougher regulations, California still needed a waiver from the federal EPA.

Ignoring the advice of its agency scientists, the Bush administration consistently refused to grant it.

By ordering a review of that decision, Obama made clear he's ready to change the policy.

"The federal government must work with, not against, states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Obama said, "The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts; we will be guided by them."

Obama Monday also ordered a speedup of new auto efficiency standards approved by Congress in 2007. The new rules would require new cars to achieve 35 miles per gallon on average beginning in 2020. Obama wants the guidelines to start affecting cars as early as 2011.

Bush administration officials had estimated it would cost the industry \$100 billion to retool to meet the new standard. With two of the biggest car companies, General Motors and Chrysler, close to financial collapse, critics of the Obama orders say the companies cannot afford to comply.

When auto companies were flying high, producing behemoth gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles and trucks, they offered other excuses. The public, auto executives claimed, would not buy energy-efficient cars.

Now, with the big gas guzzlers languishing unsold on showroom floors, they claim they can't afford to retool.

In reality, they can't afford to do otherwise. If there is going to be an auto industry in this country, it must adapt to a much more energy-efficient future.

But the issue goes beyond the economic self-interest of car companies.

The nation cannot afford to continue to drive inefficient cars that require massive amounts of gasoline refined from oil that comes from countries that are hostile to us.

Such wastefulness threatens our security and our economy. It produces global warming greenhouse gases that threaten our planet.

"For the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change," Obama said.

Sadly, the change is coming much later than it needed to. That will make it harder for the car companies to adapt, but adapt they must.

[Contra Costa Times Editorial, Tuesday, January 27, 2009:](#)

Editorial: Car makers need to get with the program

MediaNews editorial

PRESIDENT BARACK Obama, in another reversal of Bush administration policy, sent a much-needed signal Monday that the polluting ways of the U.S. automobile industry cannot continue and that the nation can look to California for leadership.

Obama directed federal regulators to reconsider an application from this state to set tougher auto emission standards than the country currently requires. The federal Clean Air Act gives California special treatment to set its own standards because the state regulated pollution before the nation.

But the state must obtain a federal waiver to supersede the national standards, a move the Bush administration, with the urging of the auto industry, denied in 2007 for political rather than scientific and policy reasons. We welcome Obama's directive that the Environmental Protection Agency revisit California's application.

The implications of the California waiver are profound, pushing automakers more quickly toward greater fuel efficiency. If the waiver is granted, other states can use California's standards instead of the federal rules. At least 13 other states and the District of Columbia have decided to do so. Consequently, a federal waiver would affect nearly half the U.S. auto market, requiring manufacturers to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent in new cars and light trucks by 2016.

To meet those standards, car makers would need to increase fuel efficiency in new vehicles to about 37 miles per gallon. In contrast, a 2007 federal law signed sets a slower pace for improving tailpipe emissions by requiring new vehicles to meet a standard of 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Although Bush signed the federal law, his administration never adopted enabling regulations. Obama on Monday also directed his administration to draw up those missing rules, starting with guidelines in time to cover 2011 model-year cars.

We recognize that auto manufacturers will have to move quickly to comply. But they should not be surprised by the requirements. Moreover, it's clear that the Luddite industry will only make improvements when pushed to do so. The country's auto manufacturers have failed to

understand that, for our economic and national security as well as the health of our planet, we must reduce gas consumption, dependence on foreign oil, and tailpipe emissions. It's a new day in Washington. We applaud the change. Now, it's time for car makers to get with the program.

[Tri-Valley Herald Editorial, Tuesday, January 27, 2009](#)

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It's a new day in Washington. We applaud the change. Now, it's time for car makers to get with the program.

[Sacramento Bee Editorial, Tuesday, January 27, 2009](#)

Editorial: Better late than never for mileage

After less than a week in office, President Barack Obama has moved aggressively to wipe away one of the most noxious anti-environmental policies of the Bush administration. On Monday, the president ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to re-examine whether California and 13 other states should be allowed to impose tougher auto emission standards to combat global warming.

California clashed repeatedly with the Bush administration over this issue. The state approved a historic greenhouse gas control measure in 2007 that required cars sold in this state to reduce the amount of planet-warming carbon dioxide they emitted. The new standards would force car

manufacturers to reduce emissions by 30 percent in new cars and trucks sold in California by 2016.

Other states followed California's lead. But car manufacturers, with the backing of the Bush administration, sued, arguing in court that carbon dioxide was not a pollutant that could be regulated by the Clean Air Act. The courts backed California. Nonetheless, to impose the new, tougher regulations, California still needed a waiver from the federal EPA. Ignoring the advice of its agency scientists, the Bush administration consistently refused to grant it. By ordering a review of that decision, Obama made clear he's ready to change the policy.

"The federal government must work with, not against, states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Obama said, "The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts; we will be guided by them."

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Bush administration officials had estimated it would cost the industry \$100 billion to retool to meet the new standard. With two of the biggest car companies, General Motors and Chrysler, close to financial collapse, critics of the Obama orders say the companies cannot afford to comply.

When auto companies were flying high, producing behemoth gas-guzzling sport-utility vehicles and trucks, they offered other excuses. The public, auto executives claimed, would not buy energy-efficient cars. Now, with the big gas guzzlers languishing unsold on showroom floors, they claim they can't afford to retool.

In reality, they can't afford to do otherwise. If there is going to be an auto industry in this country, it must adapt to a much more energy-efficient future.

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"For the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change," Obama said.

Sadly, the change is coming much later than it needed to. That will make it harder for the car companies to adapt, but adapt they must.

[Sacramento Bee, Letters to the Editor, Tuesday, January 27, 2009](#)

Auto standards must rise

Re "State may get waiver for tougher auto emissions" (Capitol & California, Jan. 23): Rep. Tom McClintock disparages the governor's attempt to have enforceable California's law for cleaner air through higher vehicle emission standards. The basis of his objection is that this will destroy California's economy. In this he joins forces with the big-bucks automaker CEOs who have driven their companies to the edge of bankruptcies while opposing vehicle efficiency regulations.

McClintock should note that as of now, Toyota is the United States' largest car manufacturer. Right here in McClintock's congressional district, I drove my Prius 400 miles from Penryn Road to Mendocino and back. The hybrid's miles per gallon, measured and calculated, was 52.1. That's a fact. This trip would have burned four to five times more fuel in our late gas guzzler.

Further, freshman McClintock says, against all odds, that the governor is using "highly questionable junk science." With this he joins his eminence Rush Limbaugh and ignores the massive preponderance of scientific papers that cite global warming as a result of human activity.

However, if science is not so understandable, our representative should consider Dick Cheney's "1 percent doctrine," which advocates acting without need for evidence.

Jon W. Candy, Loomis

Whose science is 'junk'?

Is this what the voters of the 4th Congressional District wanted? In his opposition to California's proposal to require automakers to reduce carbon-based emissions from passenger vehicles by 30 percent over the next seven years, Rep. Tom McClintock falls back on uncited "highly questionable junk science" while ignoring the fact that UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography is one of the primary partners with California's Air Resources Board in conducting the analysis of the state's proposal to address the cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

If McClintock believes the science about global warming is flawed, he should practice transparency and post on his Web site the peer-reviewed sources for his conclusions.

Secondly, McClintock voted to deny 2,000 children in the 4th District access to health insurance by voting against the state Childrens Health Insurance Program. The science that documents the improved health status of children with insurance is staggering. Voting against the interests of these children reveals a disinterest toward those most vulnerable in our society, a trait that should never be tolerated in a congressional representative.

Elwood "Bud" Lee, Granite Bay

[L.A. Times editorial, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009:](#)

A fuel-efficient future

California may get its EPA waiver to tighten emissions standards. But higher gas taxes are needed too.

President Obama granted one of our deepest pro-environment wishes Monday by directing the Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider allowing California to set tough emissions limits, and therefore tighter fuel economy standards, on vehicles. It's tempting to declare victory and move on, except that the president isn't finished with fuel and transportation policy yet. Though improving fuel efficiency will help, it's only the second-best way to reduce our reliance on foreign oil, lower greenhouse gas emissions and ensure the survival of Detroit's automakers, and it won't be enough by itself to do the job. What's really needed are higher gasoline taxes.

Following Obama's order, the EPA is widely expected to grant California a waiver to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from tailpipes, though the process will probably take a few months. In the end, vehicles sold in California and any other state that adopts its rules -- there are 13 so far -- would effectively be required to get better mileage than those sold in the rest of the country. By some estimates, they'd have to get as much as 42 mpg by 2020, compared to a national standard that will rise to 35 mpg by that year.

California's tailpipe rules would greatly burden Detroit, which would have to spend billions retooling to build cleaner cars. It also would cost consumers because hybrid engines and other fuel-sipping technologies are expensive. But that was going to happen anyway; though gas prices are low now, they are certain to rebound once the world economy recovers. Forcing automakers to start improving now will prepare them for that day and avoid another shock like the one they recently experienced when gas prices spiked and Americans suddenly stopped buying SUVs.

Yet one problem with a purely regulatory approach is that it burdens consumers without providing them any alternatives. Raising gas taxes, by contrast, creates a revenue stream that could be used to improve public transit and freight rail networks, accomplishing a host of beneficial public goals at the same time: easing traffic, reducing pollutants, providing cheaper alternatives to driving and combating sprawl. What's more, it would ensure a market for Detroit's cleaner cars -- consumers would be willing to pay a few thousand dollars more for a hybrid car if gas were heavily taxed and the higher up-front cost could be recovered over the long term. Finally,

because the existing gas tax isn't indexed to inflation, it's no longer high enough to maintain the country's existing network of roads and bridges, let alone build a 21st century transportation system.

Don't get us wrong, we're doing cartwheels over Obama's quick action on California's clean-car waiver. But it should be seen as the beginning, not the end, of the administration's effort to wean the country from its oil addiction.

[N.Y. Times editorial, Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009:](#)

New Day on Climate Change

In one dramatic stroke, President Obama has removed any doubts that he intends to break sharply from President George W. Bush's policies on yet another vital issue — this time repudiating Mr. Bush's passive approach to climate change. At a news conference on Monday, Mr. Obama directed the Environmental Protection Agency to consider immediately California's application to set its own rules on greenhouse-gas emissions from cars and trucks. Mr. Bush had rejected that application.

Once California receives permission to move ahead — as it surely will — 13 states, and possibly more, are expected to impose similar rules. The result will be to force automakers here and overseas to begin producing cars and trucks that are considerably more fuel efficient than today's models and on a faster timetable.

The California decision is of great significance not only for that reason but for what it says about Mr. Obama's commitment to the cause of reversing the rise in greenhouse gases. Mr. Bush began his tenure by breaking a campaign promise to regulate carbon dioxide and by withdrawing the United States from the Kyoto agreement on climate change. Mr. Obama begins his with a clear signal that he will not hesitate to use the regulatory levers provided by the Clean Air Act and other federal statutes to fight global warming.

California has long had the right to set stronger air pollution standards than the rest of the nation, provided it has federal permission. Its earlier requests to set stronger air pollution standards were routinely approved, but in this case the Bush administration said no, dredging up all manner of arguments to support its case. One was that California had not demonstrated "extraordinary and compelling" reasons to limit greenhouse gases; another was that a national regulatory system was preferable to state-by-state laws — even though the administration itself had shown no interest whatsoever in a national system.

In a companion move, Mr. Obama directed the Transportation Department to finalize the interim nationwide fuel-efficiency standards called for in the 2007 energy bill. These standards would eventually require fuel-efficiency increases in the American car and light-truck fleet to roughly 35 miles per gallon by 2020 from the current average of 27 m.p.g. The California standards would require automakers to reach the same 35 m.p.g. target four years ahead of the federal timetable.

The California rules cannot by themselves stop the rise in greenhouse gases. In addition to regulatory controls, Mr. Obama must eventually embrace a broader strategy involving major federal investments in clean-energy technologies and, down the road, some effort to put a price on greenhouse-gas emissions in order to unlock private investment. But after eight years of inaction, this is a wonderful start.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses green light for California and other states; they will be able to implement their own environmental policies. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Luz verde a California y otros estados para ejercer políticas ambientales propias

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Legisladores republicanos de California presionan al gobernador, Arnold Schwarzenegger para que reduzca los límites a la contaminación vehicular, ahora que el presidente, Barack Obama busca autorizar al estado para poner en práctica sus propias leyes ambientales.

Apenas el mandatario había ordenado revisar el permiso que pidieron California y otros 13 estados, y los republicanos reprobaban la ley estatal, denunció la organización Sierra Club.

Una propuesta escrita de los legisladores dice que el estado debe revisar los niveles de tolerancia a la contaminación antes de poner en vigor la ley y prohibir que los gobiernos locales restrinjan emisiones o plantas de manufactura y refinerías en California.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses California will have their own environmental law thanks to President Obama.](#)

California tendrá su propia ley ambiental gracias a Obama

Manuel Ocaño

Noticier Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, January 26, 2009

El presidente, Barack Obama autorizará hoy a California poner en vigor su propia ley de regulación de la contaminación del aire, que incluye mayores controles a las emisiones de vehículos. El mandatario presentará la autorización en una ceremonia en la Casa Blanca, de acuerdo con adelantos de su administración. Al autorizar a California, otros 13 estados tendrán por extensión permiso para activar sus leyes, réplicas de la de California. Con ese decreto, el presidente permite que cerca de la mitad de los estadounidenses impongan medidas que equivalen a retirar de circulación unos 170 millones de vehículos.