

Check Before You Burn kicks off Sunday

By Ross Farrow

Lodi News Sentinel, Friday, October 30, 2009

The annual residential fireplace program that dramatically reduces harmful airborne particulates kicks off its new season Sunday.

Check Before You Burn, which runs from November through February each year, determines when residential wood burning will add dangerous levels of particulate matter — tiny pieces of soot, ash, dust and other materials — to the San Joaquin Valley's air and prohibits the use of residential wood-burning devices. Wood-burning forecasts are issued by county each day.

There are two forecast levels — "Wood Burning Prohibited" and "Please Burn Cleanly" — depending on expected air quality. When a prohibition is declared, burning any solid fuel in a residential fireplace or wood-burning device is not permitted and violations may result in fines. Backyard chimineas and fire pits are also subject to the prohibitions.

There are two exceptions, however:

If the residence does not have access to natural-gas service, even if propane is available.

If burning solid fuel is the sole source of heat for the residence.

When burning is allowed, the air district recommends using manufactured fire logs, such as Duraflame, or dry, seasoned wood to minimize emissions.

Daily wood-burning forecasts will be available by county each day at 4:30 p.m. beginning Saturday at www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm or by calling (800) 766-4463, or by subscribing to the air district's daily air quality forecast at www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm.

For more information about Check Before You Burn, call 557-6400.

Fire control season begins

Modesto Bee, Friday, October 30, 2009

Starting Sunday, people who plan to light their fireplaces should check first with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

It is resuming the Check Before You Burn program, which tells valley residents whether fireplace use is allowed each day.

The program, which will run through February, aims to keep unhealthy soot, ash and other material out of the air. Violators can be fined. The rules apply to burning any solid fuel in a residential fireplace or wood-burning device or in a backyard fire pit. An exception is made for homes without access to natural-gas service, even if propane is available.

For each day's status, call 800-766-4463 or go to www.valleyair.org.

Central Valley wood-burning restrictions ahead

Residents face limits through February

Fresno Bee, Friday, October 30, 2009

Residents of Fresno, Bakersfield and Modesto will need to check whether they can burn wood or other solid fuel starting Sunday.

The annual Check Before You Burn program runs from November through February and determines when residential wood burning will add dangerous amounts of particulates to the Valley's air.

Each day, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which spans eight counties, issues a forecast either advising residents that "wood burning is prohibited" or asking them to "please burn cleanly."

When the forecast prohibits wood burning, there are only two exceptions: if the residence does not have access to a natural gas service or if burning solid fuel is the sole source of heat for the residence.

When burning is allowed, the air district suggests that residents use manufactured fire logs or dry, seasoned wood to minimize emissions.

To check the burning forecast, go to valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm or call (800) SMOG INFO.

Ag cool on global warming bill

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Oct. 30, 2009

While the debate over climate change legislation heats up in the U.S. Senate, local agriculture remains generally cool to the current proposal. The bill, sponsored by Democrats Sens. Barbara Boxer and John Kerry, would cut planet warming emissions 80 percent by 2050. It would establish a system called "cap and trade" that issues permits to polluting industries and gives credits to cleaner ones.

In theory, agriculture, which grows plants that suck carbon dioxide out of the air, should be credited for reducing emissions said to contribute to global warming. Farmers could then sell the credits to heavy polluters like power plants, factories, refineries and electricity and natural gas distributors.

A parallel bill in the House included such a provision.

No such provision is included in the Senate bill, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the umbrella organization that includes the Kings County Farm Bureau.

But even if the Senate bill had such a provision, many agricultural officials say it would still lead to higher energy and fertilizer costs.

"We'll never get enough carbon credits to offset the additional costs of doing business," said Hanford dairy farmer Dino Giacomazzi.

Because it agrees with that assessment, the federation is opposing both bills.

"(They) would bring higher fuel and fertilizer costs to American farmers and ranchers, which puts us at a competitive disadvantage in international markets with other countries that do not have similar carbon emissions restrictions," federation president Bob Stallman said in a press release.

Supporters of the legislation acknowledged in Senate hearings Tuesday that energy costs would go up, but they argued that the cost of doing nothing would cause even worse problems.

An Environmental Protection Agency report released by Boxer on Friday estimated that the average cost increase per household would be \$80 to \$100 a year.

Critics like Sen. Max Baucus D-Montana, say the costs will be much higher. Republicans generally characterize the cap-and-trade concept as a huge energy tax on average Americans.

Meanwhile, it may be harder and harder for climate change legislation to become a reality this year. For one thing, the Senate is preoccupied by its focus on health care legislation. And passage of the current proposal faces united opposition from Republicans and skepticism from moderate Democrats like Baucus, who are far less enthusiastic about global warming than their more liberal Democratic colleagues.

Republican arguments that the legislation is too expensive may gain a receptive audience in tough economic times.

A recent poll by the Pew Research Center found Americans' belief in global warming slipping -- dropping from 77 percent in 2006 to 57 percent today.

"The priority that people give to pollution and environmental concerns and a whole host of other issues is down because of the economy and because of the focus on other things," said Andrew Kohut, director of the research center, which conducted the poll from Sept. 30 to Oct. 4.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Let's talk leaf blowers

By Cameron Scott

San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, October 29, 2009

It's autumn and leaves do fall. Many people turn to gas-powered leaf blowers. The machines create noise and [carbon emissions](#) with the dubious trade-off of sparing human elbow grease. But how bad are they really?

Let's compare a leaf-blower to the individual's carbon emitter of choice, the automobile. A leaf blower accounts for as much carbon dioxide in an hour as a vehicle would in 100 miles. In other words, a leaf blower is environmentally worse than a car—and, if the device reduces work at all, it certainly doesn't spare its human operator the equivalent of a hundred-mile walk.

Then there's the noise. 55 decibels is considered the limit beyond which noise can damage your ears. A leaf blower can generate up to 85 decibels, and can be heard at 55 decibels as far as 50 feet away.

So not only are leaf blowers a straight-up eco no-no, they're also seriously inconsiderate of your neighbors' ears. Indeed, a study on the effect of noise pollution on humans found that the sound of a leaf blower amped up stress hormones, affecting behavior.

And, unless you use not only earplugs but also a mask while you operate them, the machines are also likely quite bad for you, because they stir up fungi, spores, and other particles you don't really want to inhale.

Bottom line: Make a family event of raking instead. And don't forget to compost the leaves.

Cleaner-Trucks Mandate Will Create Hardships at Port of Oakland

By FRANCES DINKELSPIEL

NY Times, October 30, 2009

Ablelom Zerfiel sat in the cab of his 1992 Freightliner, waiting in a long line to drop off his empty cargo container at the Port of Oakland. After driving for 12 years, Mr. Zerfiel is used to delays, low pay, grueling hours and the fickleness of the dispatch company that arranges his jobs.

"This is straight-out slavery, only modern," said Mr. Zerfiel, 49, a native of Eritrea. "The companies tell you to keep your mouth shut, take what they give you, and don't say anything because if you say anything there's always another guy who can do it."

Life for Mr. Zerfiel and many of the other 1,300 independent truckers serving the Port of Oakland is about to get even harder. In an effort to [reduce local air pollution](#), the port has mandated the use of cleaner trucks by Jan. 1. This makes it likely that Mr. Zerfiel, as well as hundreds of other drivers who cannot afford to buy new vehicles, will be out of work.

The new regulations have created a clash between two ideals long held sacred in the Bay Area: the right to decent working conditions and a push for greener technologies.

"The retrofit program and trucking ban are very important for improving air quality and reducing the impact of truck pollution on neighborhoods like West Oakland," said Doug Bloch, director of the Oakland chapter of the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports. "On the negative side, it's the truck drivers at the port who have to pay, and they can't afford it. Hundreds of them will join the army of the unemployed on Jan. 1."

West Oakland, a predominantly African-American neighborhood of 22,000 people, sits adjacent to the Port of Oakland. Three freeways and many railroad tracks run through the area. Trucks on their way to the port travel through the neighborhood at all hours of the day and night.

Their emissions — as well as the smoke and fine particulates coming from the smokestacks of idling ships — means that soot settles thickly on residents' cars and windowsills. It is dirty on these surfaces, and damaging, if not deadly, when breathed.

Asthma rates in West Oakland are five times higher than those for residents of the Oakland hills, and chances of cancer are three times higher than in other Bay Area cities, health studies show.

In 2007, the California Air Resources Board enacted a sweeping set of laws intended to reduce pollution at ports throughout the state. To comply with the law, the Port of Oakland voted earlier this year to ban trucks built before 1994 from picking up or dropping off cargo at the port, said Damian Breen, the state grants program manager for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Trucks built from 1994 to 2003 will need to be retrofitted with a special filter. By 2014, only trucks built after 2007 will have access to the port.

To help pay for the conversion, local, state and regional agencies have paid \$22 million, which Mr. Breen estimates will cover the upgrades of 1,000 trucks. But that will leave as many as 900 trucks out of compliance. Drivers who need to install filters can receive a \$16,000 grant, and those who need new trucks are eligible for \$50,000 in grants. New trucks cost \$174,000, so drivers can finance the balance with a participating bank that is offering federal small-business loans, Mr. Breen said.

But Mr. Zerfiel and others of the 1,989 truck drivers working at the port say they cannot make the switch, even with the financial help. Many, like Mr. Zerfiel, are first-generation immigrants living paycheck to paycheck. They cannot qualify for bank loans since they have bad credit ratings. They are also reluctant to spend the money for retrofits since their vehicles will have to be replaced in four years anyway.

"At the last day of December, my truck is done at the port," said Manuel Rivas, a native of El Salvador who said he could not afford to replace his 1989 vehicle.

The real problem, Mr. Bloch and other community activists said, is that the trucking system is broken. When Congress deregulated the trucking industry in 1980, it dismantled an industry dominated by large companies with union drivers. Independent truckers took their place.

Independent truckers occupy a precarious position. They must buy their own trucks, pay for their own gasoline and insurance and compete among one another for jobs. They must accept the pay offered by trucking dispatch companies. Now, they must somehow come up with the money to buy cleaner trucks.

A recent study commissioned by the Port of Oakland estimated that independent truckers earn around \$19 an hour, or \$1,050 a week and work around 57 hours a week. Employee drivers earn around \$1,250 a week. Mr. Bloch's group contends that the average wage, based on a different study, is closer to \$10.50 an hour, or less than \$600 a week.

Unions and advocates for clean air are pushing for the trucking industry to take more responsibility for buying cleaner trucks. They want the dispatching companies to hire the truckers as full-time employees with salaries and benefits, rather than rely on contract employees. "As long as you are making these guys buy their trucks, we are never going to have a clean fleet," Mr. Bloch said. "It's not sustainable."

But not all independents want to work for someone else. Carlos Jordan, 50, came to the United States from Guatemala 34 years ago. He bought one truck and saved his earnings. Today, his Jordan Trucking Company has four trucks, pictures of which he proudly stores on his BlackBerry.

"We come to America because of the freedom and opportunity," Mr. Jordan said. "This is what we want. I don't want to be forced to work for someone else."

Efforts to compel companies to use full-time employees rather than contract drivers have been stymied in court. In 2008, the Port of Los Angeles banned independent owner-operators, but was sued by the American Trucking Association, the nation's largest trucking trade group, which won a preliminary injunction against the ban in federal court. The case is set for trial in 2010.

The trucking association argued that the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act gave the federal government the sole authority to impose regulations that could hinder interstate commerce. The mayors of port cities — including Ron Dellums of Oakland, Cory Booker of Newark and Michael R. Bloomberg of New York — and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District have called on Congress to amend the 1994 law to give local jurisdictions more control.

The trucking association, which just settled a lawsuit with the Port of Long Beach over what it characterized as overly stringent requirements, believes that the push to eliminate independent drivers is a ploy to unionize drivers. Clayton Boyce, the vice president for public affairs for the association, said, "This is not about the environment," but about helping the unions.

Port of Oakland officials are watching the Los Angeles case closely, said Margaret Gordon, the port commissioner. Many commissioners are sympathetic to the burdens of independent contractors but are wary of levying lease requirements that might compel trucking or shipping companies to take their business elsewhere, Ms. Gordon said.

But the Jan. 1 deadline is drawing nearer, and many independent drivers are unsure what to do. Some say the stress is difficult to endure.

"You start thinking what's going to happen," said Roberto Soto, 44. "You can't sleep. You think: What are the chances I will find new work? What's going to happen to my family? What chance do I have to find another job?"

Group Tries to Keep Colorado Coal Plant Idle

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NY Times, Washington Post and other newspapers, October 30, 2009

DENVER (AP) -- An environmental group wants a judge to prevent Xcel Energy from firing up a new coal-fired plant in southern Colorado until a court case determines whether [pollution levels will be too high](#).

WildEarth Guardians filed a motion Wednesday in federal court seeking a preliminary injunction to keep the utility from starting operations at a new unit of the Comanche power plant in Pueblo.

The group filed a lawsuit in July that claims the utility is violating the law by not obtaining approval required by the federal Clean Air Act. Jeremy Nichols of the group's Denver office said the company hasn't adequately updated information required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on efforts to reduce mercury emissions.

The group's motion says the state is still reviewing the company's information, and the new unit could start operations as soon as November.

"To protect our health and safety, we need a court to prevent the startup and operation of Comanche 3 until Xcel complies with the Clean Air Act," Nichols said.

Xcel Energy and state officials have said the plant has equipment to significantly reduce mercury pollution and monitor emissions.

The Minneapolis-based utility said in a written statement Thursday that the unit was built with state-of-the-art emission controls and abides by an air permit issued by the Colorado Department of Public Health's Air Pollution Control Division.

"There simply is no valid basis upon which an injunction should be issued; the underlying lawsuit is without merit," Xcel Energy said.

The utility took part in negotiations in 2007 that resulted in statewide rules on mercury emissions. Xcel, Colorado's largest electric utility, and other large power providers agreed to cut emissions 80 percent by 2012.

Colorado's rules were approved as several states were battling the Bush administration over a mercury standard the states felt was too weak. Last year, a federal appeals court overturned the previous administration's approach for mercury reduction that allowed plants with excessive smokestack emissions to buy pollution rights from other operations that foul the air less.

The Obama administration is seeking more stringent controls on mercury.

Mercury is a powerful toxin that accumulates in fish and poses a risk of nerve and brain damage, especially to pregnant women and children.

An estimated 40 percent of the country's manmade mercury pollution comes from coal-fired power plants.

Methane's role in global warming underestimated

By Dan Vergano

USA TODAY, October 30, 2009

Greenhouse gas calculations blame carbon dioxide too much for global warming, and methane too little, suggest researchers Thursday.

In the journal *Science*, a team led by Drew Shindell of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York finds that chemical interactions between greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide cause more global warming than previously estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other efforts.

"The total amount of warming doesn't change, just the balance of gasses behind it," Shindell says.

The world's climate warmed an average about 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit from 1906 to 2005, very likely due to industrial greenhouse gases, the IPCC concluded in 2007, adding that [carbon dioxide](#) is "most important" greenhouse gas. Methane is a greenhouse gas produced by landfills, agriculture and some industries.

In the study, Shindell and colleagues added chemical interactions between aerosols and greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon monoxide to a century-long model of climate change. They wanted to see the effects on each gas's "Global Warming Potential," or individual contribution to global warming.

Methane played a bigger role than expected, suggesting that climate treaties such as the 1997 Kyoto Protocol need to consider it more carefully, the study says.

Greenhouse gases are transparent to sunlight, but retain heat in the atmosphere, raising global average temperatures. Burning fossil fuels, deforestation and other human activities have raised greenhouse gas levels to historic values in the last three centuries.

"There is no way, other than aggressive geoengineering, to come close to meeting the world leaders' goal of overall warming not exceeding (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial (levels) without focusing on BOTH carbon dioxide and non-carbon dioxide emissions," says Michael MacCracken of the Climate Institute, by email. "This is not an either-or choice — we must do both to have any chance at all."

Because non-carbon dioxide gasses also cause air pollution, MacCracken and Shindell both suggest that politicians may embrace limiting those emissions in developing nations more quickly than carbon dioxide ones. China has about 750,000 air-quality-related deaths annually according to the World Health Organization, for example.

In December, representatives of 192 nations head to Copenhagen to work on an international agreement to limit emissions. On the international front, "getting priorities right on the non-carbon

dioxide greenhouse gases has some real value," says MacCracken, a former Clinton-administration climate scientist. If negotiations keep stalling on carbon dioxide emissions debate, then "all of our efforts on the non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gases won't make much difference," he says. "There needs to be a deal and, in my view, cutting non-carbon dioxide greenhouse gases and soot can be a helpful bridge to getting an agreement."

Current emissions of aerosols actually cool the atmosphere an average about 1.26 degrees Fahrenheit, notes aerosol expert Joyce Penner of the University of Michigan. "So changing aerosol concentrations through changing greenhouse gas emissions is certainly a factor that needs to be considered," Penner says. "I think that what is needed here is a holistic approach to climate control that takes into account all the factors that influence climate change (including the present day "protection" by aerosol emissions)."

EU offers billions to climate change aid fund

By Aoife White, AP Business Writer

In the San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, October 30, 2009

European Union leaders on Friday pledged to pay their "fair share" into a euro50 billion (\$74 billion) annual fund to help developing nations fight climate change — but didn't agree on how much Europe would actually contribute.

Environmentalists blasted the 27-nation bloc for failing to seize a crucial high ground before a global treaty on climate change is negotiated in Copenhagen in December.

The money aims to tempt poor countries into backing tight greenhouse gas limits at the U.N. talks in Copenhagen and put more pressure on the world's two largest polluters, China and the United States, to agree to emissions cuts.

Yet the EU failed to agree on an exact amount to give after nine poorer EU states balked at handing out aid when their own budgets were stretched to the limit by the global financial crisis.

Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, who led the talks between EU leaders, said the funding promise "allows the European Union to continue taking the lead in the negotiations."

"Let's hope that others will now follow this," he said.

The EU also promised new deeper cuts in its emissions of between 80 percent to 95 percent by 2050 if the Copenhagen talks reach an ambitious deal.

The leaders said they would not require EU states to contribute to the fund before 2013. Any payments toward the euro5 billion to euro7 billion (\$7.3 billion to \$10.3 billion) a year it says developing nations should get from 2010 through 2012 would be voluntary.

But EU nations would have to pay into the fund from 2013 to 2020 — and talks will continue on how much each should give and what an overall figure would be.

Oxfam and Friends of the Earth said Europe's pledge was not nearly enough, claiming both the EU and the U.S. should donate at least euro35 billion (\$52 billion) a year.

"(The EU) failed to use this opportunity to put its money where its mouth is," said Joris den Blanken of Greenpeace. "(President Barack Obama should now) step up and break the deadlock in negotiations."

The Copenhagen summit is seen as a watershed moment for fighting climate change and for global cooperation, and for years the EU has been seeking out the moral high ground, challenging other powers — above all, the United States — to match Europe's commitment.

With the U.S. hamstrung by Congress, which has yet to approve U.S. emissions targets, poorer countries are looking to the EU to set the pace that they expect other industrialized countries to match.

Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen, who will host the U.N. talks, said "this is not about money."

"This is about reducing the manmade temperature rise," he said. "We want to avoid poverty, farmland erosion and climate migration."

Britain's Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he and government ministers would lobby other nations worldwide to get a climate change pact, and said the EU's move on Friday made an accord in Copenhagen more likely.

"They make possible a Copenhagen deal that will encourage other countries to make themselves ambitious efforts," Brown said. "We agreed that European Union and its member states are ready to contribute their fair share of the costs."

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said "Europe will be determined and united" in Copenhagen, but he stressed that the economic stability of poor EU member states is "very important."

Nine eastern EU members didn't share the ambitions of richer EU nations, such as Britain and Sweden, for a climate deal that would add to mounting public debt: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania.

On the financial crisis, EU leaders are still grappling with huge debt they built up by rescuing banks and supporting their feeble economies. In a statement, they said they were not ready to withdraw economy stimulus programs and would wait until a recovery is "fully secured."

Senate Climate Markup Set for Tuesday but Will Any Republicans Show?

By DARREN SAMUELSON of ClimateWire
Ny Times, October 30, 2009

The Senate global warming debate appears headed for a partisan standoff early next week with Republicans threatening to boycott a key committee vote and Democrats weighing their options on an alternative route to advance the bill to the floor.

Environment and Public Works Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said yesterday that she is planning to hold a markup Tuesday on S. 1733 (pdf), a bill that seeks to curb domestic [greenhouse gas emissions](#) across much of the U.S. economy.

But Boxer cannot hold the markup unless at least two Republicans show up, and EPW ranking member James Inhofe (R-Okla.) signaled that he has unanimous support among the panel's minority members to boycott the session until they get more data on the legislation from U.S. EPA and the Congressional Budget Office.

Inhofe said he will wait for Boxer to file an official notice of the markup -- expected today -- before responding with his own declaration of the GOP's markup strategy.

"As soon as we find out what her announcement is and what she wants to do, we'll have our response," Inhofe told E&E last night. "We'll have our unanimous expression ready."

For her part, Boxer insisted that she would not back down from the markup, and she even opened the door to alternative approaches for moving the bill, including the use of Senate Rule 14 that allows the majority to discharge legislation out of a committee and bring it directly to the floor.

"We're going forward," Boxer said. "We're going to do our job. We're going to use every tool at our disposal to get this done."

Partisan tension on the EPW Committee stretches back more than a decade, but recent battles between the two parties have been especially tense when it comes to debate over climate policy (E&E Daily, Sept. 29).

Lawmakers repeatedly raised their voice at each other during three days of hearings this week on the climate bill, with Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio) complaining yesterday that Boxer had been unfairly chiming in after any remarks that did not square with her point of view.

"You're editorializing on my comments, as you do everyone else's comments," Voinovich said just moments after seizing on testimony earlier this week from U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson

where the Obama official acknowledged the agency did not do a specific set of modeling runs on the Senate bill. Jackson said it would take four to five more weeks to do such a review.

Boxer replied that she is satisfied with the EPA analysis Jackson released last Friday. "This is the longest study there is," she said, noting that it included a two-week review of the Senate proposal, as well as the findings from a five-week review that the agency took this spring to analyze H.R. 2454 (pdf), the House-passed climate bill.

Combined, Boxer said the two bills are 90 percent similar, leaving little reason to dive deeper before the markup. "We're not going to waste taxpayer money because someone drew a line in the sand," she said.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) called the threat of a GOP boycott "theatrics."

As for the merits of the Republicans' request, Whitehouse argued, "I think the notion that absolute exactitude before the bill goes in, when the EPA has come so close to figuring out its economic effects, doesn't make any sense in light of the fact the amendment process is going to move the results around more than the level of uncertainty that exists right now."

But Voinovich said that he wanted to have the EPA analysis, as well as a CBO review, to help him prepare for the markup. "The fact of the matter is, the complete analysis gives you a much better idea of what kind of amendments you ought to be working on," he said.

To make their case, Republicans went back into the history books to find other examples of the Senate committee delaying its work to get more information from EPA.

Inhofe cited the two-year buildup that led to a tie 9-9 vote on former President George W. Bush's "Clear Skies" initiative, which would have overhauled the Clean Air Act without setting limits on greenhouse gas emissions. The GOP held a narrow Senate majority during the Clear Skies debate, but Inhofe as EPW Committee chairman could not convince then-Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.) or any Democrats to vote for the bill, including then-Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois (E&E Daily, March 10, 2003).

The Bush-led EPA produced more than 10,000 pages of analysis on the air pollution bill, but Inhofe insisted that he still postponed the March 2005 markup several times as Democrats pushed for more information.

Senate Democrats did boycott for two weeks the 2003 confirmation of Michael Leavitt, who was nominated -- and eventually confirmed -- to be the U.S. EPA administrator (Greenwire, Oct. 1, 2003).

Across Capitol Hill, House Republicans earlier this year considered a number of different approaches to stall consideration of that climate bill, including forcing the clerk of the Energy and Commerce Committee to read the entire bill aloud.

Anticipating such a move, Democrats hired a speed reader. But Republicans instead opted for a more political campaign that forced moderate and conservative Democrats to take votes on dozens of amendments that attempted to link the proposal to higher unemployment and more expensive energy bills. GOP campaign operatives sent out press releases to reporters in the Democrats' districts immediately after each vote.

Voinovich yesterday shrugged off the prospect of political red meat. "You should have the best intelligence in front of you," he said.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) said he hoped the GOP lawmakers would ultimately back down from their boycott threat if they were promised a more complete study before the floor debate, which is widely expected to come early next year.

"Certainly by the time all these bills are merged, and by the time we get to the floor, I think there's ample time for EPA to finish the work they've already begun," Carper said. "Hopefully, whatever our Republican friends feel like they need in terms of modeling, they'll have it by the time the bill has come to the floor."

Copyright 2009 E&E Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Letter to the Editor, Friday, Oct. 30, 2009:](#)

Gamboa has expertise, contacts to lead city

Mayor Jesus Gamboa has a master's degree in public administration, he is Visalia's only voice on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, is on a first-name basis with the California governor and our congressman in Washington, D.C.

This means Visalia now has a front-row seat to get our taxpayers' dollars coming back to our community.

His leadership and experience on the Visalia City Council as a three-time mayor is invaluable in obtaining grant money and procuring state and federal support for the city.

His pro-business stance helped bring Macy's to Visalia, kept our hospital growing to help make our downtown vibrant and voted to approve smart growth in our housing subdivisions to increase the value of our real estate.

We need to vote Gamboa on Tuesday, Nov. 3, and keep his expertise working for all Visalians.

Lane Fye, Visalia