

California Clean Cars Campaign

Global Warming Solutions for a Healthy California

www.calcleancars.org

American Lung Association
of California

Bluewater Network

California League of
Conservation Voters

California Public Interest
Research Group

Center for Energy Efficiency
and Renewable
Technologies

Coalition for Clean Air

Environment California

Environmental Defense

Natural Resources
Defense Council

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Responsibility

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Foundation

Union of Concerned
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Automakers Cry Wolf Again

There they go again. The auto industry has fought nearly every regulation proposed to make cars safer or less harmful to the environment. Executives claim outrageous cost, lack of market support, and general dire consequences if they are forced to adopt a new technology for the public good. Later, when the new technology succeeds, they claim credit for the accomplishments.

In the last few months, carmakers and their cronies have claimed disastrous consequences of the proposed California Vehicle Global Warming Regulation, including this absurd piece of fiction:

“We can’t drive an SUV any more... Sacramento says SUVs cause global warming so they shrunk them down and jacked up the price.”
--SUV Owners of America radio spot airing in Sacramento, 8-2-04.

The regulation will neither ban SUVs nor require carmakers to make smaller cars. The proposed regulation, under consideration by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) in September, is bound by requirements in the original legislation, AB 1493 (Pavley, 2002). The law specifically outlaws:

- A ban on the sale of any vehicle category in the state, specifically including, but not limited to, sport utility vehicles and light-duty trucks
- Any requirement to reduce vehicle weight

The original legislation also outlaws:

- New taxes or fees on vehicles, fuels or miles traveled
- Reductions in the speed limit or vehicle miles traveled

Automakers also claim the regulation goes too far and is too costly. But, again, the law states that the regulation must be technologically feasible and cost-effective, and ARB staff has drafted a proposal that meets the Legislature’s intent. Automakers don’t even have to start incorporating technologies to reduce global warming emissions in their new vehicles until 2009. And the proposed regulation gives carmakers until 2016 to meet all the requirements.

Crying wolf isn’t new for carmakers. An EPA analysis of estimated costs of complying with clean air regulations found that while EPA generally overestimated costs, industry estimates were significantly higher than actual price changes. On the vehicle side, the cumulative impact of manufacturer overestimates from 1994 – 2001 is as much as \$500 per vehicle.¹

¹ “Comparison of EPA and Other Estimates of Mobile Source Rule Costs to Actual Price Changes,” John F. Anderson, Todd Sherwood, Office of Transportation and Air Quality, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ann Arbor, MI, 2002-01-1980

Ironically, while the carmakers have been busy saying “can’t do” and “costs too much” they’ve also launched an expensive ad campaign in California touting their safety and environmental technology advances.

“Every new car on the road today has onboard computers more powerful than the ones that took us to the moon... The people who design and make them [cars, SUVs and light trucks] are already putting tomorrow’s computer technology on board with you today.”

--Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers radio spot, spring 2004. www.wedrive.com

...Our point, exactly. The technology exists *today* to make safer, cleaner cars. So why *are* carmakers fighting California’s law to put safer, cleaner cars on the road starting in 2009? Could it be because they don’t like being told what to do?

They used the same old, false and misleading arguments in 2002 to oppose AB 1493 and they spent millions fighting the states’ Zero-Emission Vehicle requirement. And they fought clean car requirements a decade ago. Back then, carmakers said it would cost \$800 per car to meet California’s highly successful 1994 low emission vehicle standards. In fact, the real price tag turned out to be just \$80.

And they fought federal requirements in 1975:

“If GM is forced to introduce catalytic converter systems across-the-board on 1975 models, the prospect of an unreasonable risk of business catastrophe and massive difficulties with these vehicles must be faced. It is conceivable that complete stoppage of the entire production could occur, with the obvious tremendous loss to the company, shareholders, employees, suppliers, and communities. Short of that ultimate risk, there is a distinct possibility of varying degrees of interruption, with sizable dislocations.”

--Former General Motors Vice President Ernest S. Starkman

Perhaps a little review of the facts will bring it all into perspective:

“Government regulations in California, U.S. and elsewhere have played a large role in the evolution of vehicle technology. Vehicles are now much safer and lower emitting, and consume less fuel (per mile) than several decades ago. Government regulations played a central role in reducing emissions and improving safety. Emissions improvement occurred almost exclusively because of persistent and aggressive government regulation. Market factors and consumer behavior played almost no role. These improvements initially were quite expensive, but government persisted because air quality retained strong public support. Eventually, technical innovation resulted in continuing improvements at little or no extra cost. Current vehicles are cleaner burning than ever and yet the cost of emission control per vehicle is no greater than it was in the early 1980s.”²

² “Analysis of Auto Industry and Consumer Response to Regulations and Technological Change, and Customization of Consumer Response Models in Support of AB 1493 Rulemaking” Prepared for California Air Resources Board, Daniel Sperling, D. Bunch, A. Burke, with E. Abeles, B. Chen, K. Kurani, T. Turrentine, ITS-Davis, June 2004