

Clinton sees greener pastures if California can lead the way

Democratic presidential candidate, in visit to L.A. area union hall, praises state's determination to curb vehicle emissions.

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COMMERCE – California's battle with the Bush administration over curbing automobile emissions picked up a vocal ally in Hillary Rodham Clinton as she campaigned Friday for the state's Feb. 5 Democratic presidential primary vote by embracing Golden State environmental values.

Appearing in a solar-powered job training center of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Commerce, the New York senator applauded California's leadership on global warming.

She also lauded the state's decision to sue the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bush administration for blocking California's effort to impose the nation's first greenhouse gas emissions for cars and light trucks.

"I strongly support what the state is trying to do to begin to regulate the fuel pipe emissions," Clinton said. "It's a big fight with the EPA and the Bush administration, but California can be a leader again."

Before a raucous crowd of supporters at the Los Angeles area union hall, Clinton also took up the cause of state residents who fear losing their homes to a subprime rate lending crisis that has left many with mortgages they can no longer afford.

She outlined a \$30 billion national plan to protect "hard-working communities" and "distressed homeowners," including 95,000 California families "in foreclosure right now."

In her first stop in California after declaring that "I found my own voice" in her win in the New Hampshire presidential primary, Clinton promoted economic populism by outlining a \$70 billion national stimulus program, including the mortgage relief program and plans to curb energy costs and promote "green technologies."

Clinton, who said California leaders have long taken "a hard look at gas mileage and begun to make some changes," is proposing national action on global warming that parallels efforts by Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Legislature.

California's landmark 2006 law seeks to cut the state's greenhouse gases by 25 percent – to 1990 levels – by 2020 and by 80 percent by 2050.

As she discussed her economic program Friday, she drew cheers and a few standing ovations from the union throng as she assailed predatory mortgage lenders, Wall Street and international investors for worsening the plight of struggling Americans.

Pointedly criticizing those who pushed risky, subprime rate loans that have forced hundreds of thousands of Americans into foreclosure, Clinton said: "A lot of pressure is coming from the investors who bought all these loans.

"It's not our local bank. It's not the fella who sold it to you. It's somebody sitting in Shanghai or Dubai or Berlin or London.

"And they're saying, 'I'm supposed to get an interest rate return and, if you stop me from doing that, I'm not getting a return on that investment.'"

But she said investors need to accept smaller profits to protect homeowners, declaring: "On this issue, Wall Street is complicit with the banks and the mortgage brokers and the lenders."

Coming off a week in which she became the first woman to win a state presidential primary only days after her campaign was seen as collapsing, Clinton appeared upbeat as she invited questions from the crowd.

A local engineer, Frank Santana, asked her how she would help veterans.

She told him of having met a wounded Army captain – a West Point graduate – who suffered a traumatic brain injury from an explosion in Iraq and now needs his wife to write down basic things to remember just so he can make it through the day.

"What is happening now is that we are bringing home profoundly injured young men and women. It's not only physical but psychological, emotional," Clinton said.

In the pro-Clinton crowd, many of the audience comments were adoring.

"Hillary, marry me, baby!" one man stood up and shouted.

"No," she replied, laughing. "That certainly is the kindest offer I've gotten. But I would probably get arrested."