

Lead or Step Aside, EPA States Can't Wait on Global Warming

By Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jodi Rell
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It's bad enough that the federal government has yet to take the threat of global warming seriously, but it borders on malfeasance for it to block the efforts of states such as California and Connecticut that are trying to protect the public's health and welfare.

California, Connecticut and 10 other states are poised to enact tailpipe emissions standards -- tougher than existing federal requirements -- that would cut greenhouse gas emissions from cars, light trucks and sport-utility vehicles by 392 million metric tons by the year 2020, the equivalent to taking 74 million of today's cars off the road for an entire year.

Since transportation accounts for one-third of America's greenhouse gas emissions, enacting these standards would be a huge step forward in our efforts to clean the environment and would show the rest of the world that our nation is serious about fighting global warming.

Yet for the past 16 months, the Environmental Protection Agency has refused to give us permission to do so.

Even after the Supreme Court [ruled](#) in our favor last [month](#), the federal government continues to stand in our way.

Another discouraging sign came just [last week](#), when President Bush issued an [executive order](#) to give federal agencies until the end of 2008 to continue studying the threat of greenhouse gas emissions and determine what can be done about them.

To us, that again sounds like more of the same inaction and denial, and it is unconscionable.

Under the Clean Air Act, California has the right to enact its own air pollution standards, which other states may then follow, as long as the EPA grants California a waiver. The waiver gives California, and other states, formal permission to deviate from federal standards. California has requested more than 40 such waivers over the past 30 years and has been granted full or partial permission for most of them.

By continuing to stonewall California's request, the federal government is blocking the will of tens of millions of people in California, Connecticut and other states who want their government to take real action on global warming.

The EPA is finally holding the first of two hearings on the waiver request tomorrow, and we welcome the opportunity to call attention to the harmful effects that global warming is having on people and the environment.

But we are far from convinced that the agency intends to follow the law and grant us our waiver.

If it fails to do so, we have an obligation to take legal action and settle this issue once and for all.

The threat is real. Scientists tell us that if nothing is done to stop the warming of Earth's atmosphere, we can expect an increasing number of droughts, greater risk of forest fires, a reduction in our snowpack, an increase in sea levels, more flooding in winter and hotter temperatures in summer.

There can be little debate anymore on whether the effects of climate change constitute a looming threat to the public's health and welfare.

Republicans and Democrats in statehouses around the country have already spoken loudly that federal inaction on climate change is unacceptable and have acted on their own initiative.

Whether it is Northeastern states uniting to reduce greenhouse gases from electric generators or Western states looking to reduce emissions throughout the economy, momentum is building everywhere but in Washington. The federal government should not stand in the way of dealing with the most serious environmental challenge facing the world.

While the United States represents just 5 percent of the world's population, it produces 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gases.

With the landmark legislation authored by former assemblywoman Fran Pavley and passed in 2002, California demonstrated that it is serious about cutting down these emissions from cars. Connecticut also has a strong record on greenhouse gas reduction, which includes adoption of California's tough standards for vehicle tailpipe emissions.

California, Connecticut and a host of like-minded states are proving that you can protect the environment and the economy simultaneously.

It's high time the federal government becomes our partner or gets out of the way.

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