

California lawmakers advance aggressive climate change plans

June 3 2015, by Judy Lin

California lawmakers on Wednesday pushed through an ambitious climate change package to further reduce the state's carbon footprint and boost the use of renewable energy to 50 percent in 15 years.

The state Senate passed proposals to enact Gov. Jerry Brown's call to curb greenhouse gas emissions by setting what the administration calls the most aggressive benchmark in North America over the objection of Republicans who characterized such regulation as coastal elitism that would kill working-class jobs.

California aims to boost statewide renewable electricity use to 50 percent, have drivers use half as much gasoline and make buildings twice as efficient under the proposal by Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de Leon, D-Los Angeles. His bill, SB350, advanced to the Assembly on a 24-14 vote.

"California has demonstrated our global climate leadership over the last decade," de Leon said, adding, "These policies will further cement our leadership, further strengthen our economy while protect the health of our communities."

Senate Democrats also approved an overarching proposal to further reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

The goal is a mile marker on the way to cutting emissions by 80 percent

from 1990 levels by 2050 that was set by Brown's predecessor, former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

SB32 by Sen. Fran Pavley, D-Agoura Hills, passed the Senate on a 22-15 vote.

"It is a big number—science-based number, however," Pavley said, "what we have to do without reaching the tipping point regarding global climate change."

California, which already has an aggressive plan to combat global warming, currently is on track to meet a goal of cutting carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, partly by forcing companies to pay for their pollution.

The state's cap-and-trade program, launched nearly three years ago, offers one of the few real-world laboratories on how to reduce heat-trapping emissions. It expanded this year to levy fees on companies that produce gasoline and other fuels, prompting predictions that consumers will see a spike in prices to cover the costs.

Pavley's bill incorporates an executive order Brown issued in April to further emissions reductions—the equivalent of taking 36 million cars off the road, more than all the vehicles registered in California last year.

While the executive order lacked details, state officials have said it would require accelerated development of renewable energy and alternative fuel sources, and getting more electric cars and zero-emission heavy-duty trucks on the road.

GOP members said the package would mean the government will pick economic winners and losers, raise utility and gasoline prices, and drive out good-paying jobs just so California can feel good about leading an

environmental fight.

They also said there is inadequate oversight of the rule-setting process.

"This is really a stab in the dark, and it's unknown," said Senate Minority Leader Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar. "Every new technology that has driven California has been when government got out of the way."

Democrats argued that it's not a choice between jobs and the environment. Rather, they say fostering clean-energy jobs will mean more people will drive electric vehicles and have solar panels on their homes.

Pavley, who authored the state's 2006 global warming law, said more than \$30 billion in venture capital has flowed into California as a result of establishing a marketplace for the private sector to compete.

The California Assembly also moved Wednesday on two climate change bills that are narrower in scope.

One bill, AB1288, would allow the state Air Resources Board to continue conducting market-based regulations beyond its 2020 authority, while the other, AB645, called for the state to require at least half of all energy come from wind, solar and other renewable sources by 2050.

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