

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Golden State Strikes Back on Emissions

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Your editorial about California's lawsuit seeking EPA approval of California's greenhouse gas automobile standards ("Arnold's Imperialism," Nov. 12), repeats auto industry myths and distorts California's regulatory program.

California adopted its own greenhouse gas regulations because of the extraordinary challenges posed right now by global warming. The standards apply only in other states that have voluntarily chosen to adopt California's standards as their own. Eleven states already adopted California's standards and more states have committed to do so, comprising more than 40% of American citizens. Automakers are subject to only two possible standards: a federal standard, or California's standard. Having separate California-led emissions standards has led to breakthroughs like the catalytic converter and other pollution-control innovations.

The editorial recycles industry claims of increased costs that have been raised by automakers for every significant health and safety measure adopted since the '70s -- scare tactics that have been proven wrong every time. Time will prove them wrong again in the case of greenhouse gas regulations. Likewise, California's requirements do not depend on increased fuel economy, as the editorial claims. Manufacturers can comply by using alternative fuels or improving air-conditioning systems. They also have total flexibility to buy and sell credits among themselves, and among different categories of vehicles.

The editorial erroneously suggests that California's lawsuit is a "confidence trick" to force EPA to adopt a carbon policy. But EPA does not need to make an endangerment finding to grant a waiver to California; the Clean Air Act specifically envisions California acting before EPA makes any such determination. Moreover, in light of the overwhelming scientific consensus about the risks of global warming, it is no longer credible to argue that greenhouse gases do not meet the statute's cautionary trigger that they are "reasonably anticipated" to "endanger public health or welfare."

For the past 40 years, California has pioneered the development of air pollution standards; our more stringent standards have benefited other states and the nation as a whole. After four years of public deliberation, the California Air Resources Board adopted a reasonable set of greenhouse gas regulations. The law requires EPA to decide on California's waiver request. Action is overdue.

Edmund G. Brown Jr.

California Attorney General

Sacramento, Calif.