

Attorney General Jerry Brown  
West Coast Green  
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San Jose, California

## Speech Transcript

If you look at a lot of development today it's not about housing but it's about human garaging. What I mean by that is they build these houses as far away as you can get, east of Manteca, way up into wherever. And then, there are no jobs there. Houses are cheap by the way. The further you get from San Jose and San Francisco and Oakland, the Bay Area, the cheaper the land gets. But there's one problem – you have to drive back to get a job and then you have to burn oil. So most of these new human garage projects are really oil dependency stimulators. And that's really the challenge and we've got to deal with that.

Back in the 70s, the legislature passed a 55% tax credit for solar installations, 25% tax credit for all businesses that invested in conservation technologies. We had a solar technician program to teach young kids how to install solar collectors on roofs. That time it was hot water solar, we weren't really talking too much about photovoltaic. And then we got these building standards and then we got the appliance standards. The end result, of course, California became the most energy efficient state in the country. We were leading the way in so many different ways but of course that didn't make people so happy.

Ronald Regan was elected president and we had this appliance standard for refrigerators, for stoves to make them meet a certain efficiency standard. The federal government came along and in the 80s and they preempted it. They said, "We want our own standard and our standard is no standard." Can you believe that? A no standard standard preempted to California's standard. And there's where we are. So the federal government has been at war with American independence, energy independence and efficiency for the last 25 years. That's a fact and that why we are so dependent on the people over there in the Middle East.

California, in the early 80s, as a result of a couple of things – a result of measures taken on tax credits at the federal level, the state level, the Public Utilities Commission rules – all that produced, in California, what turned out to be over 90% of the electricity generated by wind, about 1,800 mega-watts. That was in the early 80s and it was a real model. Today, California has a very tiny fraction of the world's wind energy because the various personalities in politics, the torch of leadership has gone elsewhere.

Up until a couple hundred years ago, there were only 500 million people. And those 500 million people weren't using coal, weren't using oil, weren't using gas and weren't driving cars. Now those 500 million people are 6.7 billion, we're approaching a billion vehicles and we are obviously bringing about unprecedented impacts, changes on the pattern of life and nature of which we are a tiny fractional part.

Now it was just a couple of years ago that 98 of the members of the U.S. Senate voted against signing the Kyoto Protocol. 98 out of 100. Democrats and Republicans. It was only a few years ago that for 20 years, the federal government refused to increase the fuel efficiency of automobiles. In fact, when California adopted a few years ago fuel efficiency standards, the automobile companies sued us. And they're still suing us. They are suing us here in California, they're suing other states that have copied California. And now as they're bankrupt, they are

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going to Washington to get a bailout so that they can build efficient cars, which they could have built if they had just opened their eyes and did the right thing!

Congress under both parties hated fuel efficiency. Why did they hate it? Because the auto companies had their nice advertising, their propaganda, their worldview that if you're not in a bigger and bigger car, you're not safe. You're not really American. You're not a soccer mom unless you have a big car, unless you have a couple of tons of steel and plastic encompassing your frail little body. I mean think about it. How inefficient is it to put people in these big mechanical bubbles and move them around burning oil, destroying the environment. Pretty crazy, but that that's the norm and if you go against it you're weird.

Oil, waste, destruction, excess – quantity over quality. But there's the real conflict. Can we appreciate quality, can we appreciate proportionality so that we are in balance.

Ecology is very much tied to economics. Economy and ecology come from the root word, it's a Greek word, meaning "household." Economics is about the rules of the household, the big household that we are all buying and selling in. Ecology uses the word "logos" to tie into the house that we are in. Logos, in ancient tradition, is the word for the divine spirit. So ecology is about the larger pattern, the spirit of which we are all apart and which makes everything go. So ecology has to trump economics. Economics is inside ecology and if we don't pay attention to ecology, the economics gets all screwed up and that exactly what's happening.

So federal government lets go - appliance standards, building standards. California with our Title 24 is ahead of the rest of the country and they have to catch up and we need the investment in new technologies – in solar, in wind, in photosynthesis and all of that stuff. That's where we have to put our money. And what have we done? Since I left the governor's office the percentage going to prisons has gone from 2% to 10%. That's 8 billion extra dollars to do the same thing in this society just in 30 years. We are putting money here and putting money there, we have to invest it – it has to be in the private sector to a great extent but government itself has a great obligation and opportunity.

They are screwing it up, now they need \$700 billion. By the way, you notice that you get \$700 billion in a few days, the Iraq war in a few years you spend \$700 billion. Oil bill – you get \$700 billion in maybe 15 months. Why couldn't we do the same thing? Hey, \$700 billion for solar, for efficiency, for conservation. Why not?

By the way, they tell us, that the accumulated debt, public and private – that's student loans, that credit cards, that mortgages, that corporate – 2 weeks ago it was \$47 trillion. Now it's about \$48 trillion. So what's another trillion? Let's put that into solar, alternative energy, more fuel-efficient cars, trains, buses, and better houses to live in. Give a trillion here, give a trillion there and you could get a lot done but you have to think big and that's why you're here.

But at the same time, there's still a principle that has informed every religious tradition in the history of mankind and that's self-limitation – being able to perceive when enough is enough.

I once talked about entering an era of limits and then people got mad at me. Brown's against having fun, he's against growth, against – No! Everything has a limit. Our bodies have limits,

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cars have limits. Everything's got a limit and we have to understand the limits that define our reality. We're exceeding those limits in this generation.

The CO<sub>2</sub> last year was more than was generated the year before. The increase is accelerating. The capacity of the oceans is diminishing as a sink to absorb the CO<sub>2</sub>. The methane that has been captured in the permafrost is beginning to leak out. The thing builds and accelerates and this big weather system, whether it's a hurricane or a forest fire or an earthquake – that's big stuff – it's a lot bigger than our little political ideas. While we take care of daily activities in economics we have to be able to turn this system in way that is compatible with rules of nature, the rules of the household that we are apart of and we're not there yet. Congress is not there, neither of the parties are there. We need a big shakeup to get even a minimal shift. That's what I challenge you to do today. Think that shift in your own mind, make that shift in your lives and then lets turn this political process around so we have something to give to those that come after us.

Thank you very much and I appreciate all of your activism.