



## Prop 23: Will California Reject Climatism?

By Steve Goreham

On November 2, American citizens will go to the polls to elect our political leaders. One state measure demands the attention of environmental and energy interests across the nation: Proposition 23 in California.

Proposition 23 would delay implementation of AB32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, until state unemployment drops below 5.5 percent. Over \$25 million has been [raised](#) by advocates and opponents of the measure. In a desperate attempt to save AB32, environmental groups have turned up the propaganda machine.



Assembly Bill 32 was signed into law in September, 2006 by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The bill requires a reduction in state greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. As tasked, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) developed a “Scoping [Plan](#)” in 2008, making AB32 the toughest U.S. climate legislation.

The Plan calls for a Low Carbon Fuel Standard for vehicle fuels, and

includes regulations for tires, engine oils, paints, window glazes, and vehicle insurance. New fees and regulations are required for housing, businesses, trucking, refrigerated vehicles, cargo vessels, rail freight, and chemicals. California must participate in the Western Climate Initiative cap-and-trade system. AB32 is a blizzard of new regulations for California



consumers and businesses.

But Climatist opponents of Prop 23 (advocates of AB32) are clothing the debate in totally different language. It's astonishing that the [website](#) of "NO on 23," the leading opponent, never mentions greenhouse gases, and mentions climate change only once. Instead, the site talks about air pollution, dirty energy, and green jobs. It appears that fighting global warming, the stated purpose of AB32, is a loser with California voters.

The League of Conservation Voters [declares](#) AB32 a "threat to California's landmark air pollution standards." This is nonsense. California has a long history of reducing air pollution. The first statewide [standards](#) were enacted in 1956, CARB was created in 1969, and the California Clean Air Act went into effect in 1988. Ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon particulates, and other pollutants have been steadily dropping for the last 30 years. The Reason Public Policy Institute [finds](#) that emissions from the state automobile fleet are dropping *each year* by 15% for volatile organic compounds, 13% for carbon monoxide, and 9% for nitrogen oxides. Suspension of AB32, scheduled to take effect during the next two years, would not interrupt the ongoing decline of any of these pollutants. In fact, the act is primarily aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions in a futile attempt to reduce global warming.

Climatism, the belief that man-made greenhouse gas emissions are destroying Earth's climate, has declared war on carbon dioxide and

labeled it a “dirty pollutant.” But CO<sub>2</sub> is neither dirty nor a pollutant. CO<sub>2</sub> is an invisible, harmless gas. It does not cause smoke or smog. In fact, CO<sub>2</sub> is plant food, essential for life on Earth, and the best compound humans can put into the atmosphere to grow the biosphere.

In speaking of the Prop 23 fight, Governor Schwarzenegger stated: “This is not just about California. It is about America’s economic prosperity and leadership in the years ahead. California is America’s last hope for energy change.”

California citizens should ask: Why is AB32 so urgently needed to promote green energy? The reason is that AB32 includes a mandate that 33% of California’s electricity be from renewable sources by 2020. Despite decades of subsidies for wind, solar, and biofuels, in-state renewables provided only 9.6% of the electricity demand in 2009. California windfarms delivered only 1.7% and solar fields only 0.3% of demand. Imported electricity from nearby states met 30% of the need. Without AB32 mandates to force utilities to buy expensive and intermittent renewable electricity, “energy change” would not be possible.

Even though California is blessed with hydropower, geothermal sites, wind-swept ridges, and sunlit skies, electricity rates are climbing with renewable usage. California retail electricity rates are now 12.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, significantly higher than all other western states, and 28% over the national average. In the words of movie character Dirty Harry: “That’s a heck of a price to pay for being stylish.”

The growth of “green jobs” is touted by advocates of AB32, who regard Prop 23 as a threat to these jobs. The organization “NO on 23” states “If we roll back our clean energy standards, California would lose hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investments to other states.” But evidence shows that the green energy revolution is not going well.

For the last 30 years, California has employed heavy subsidies and promotional programs to establish the nation’s most favorable green energy environment. The state led the way in wind power, installing 17,000 wind turbines by 1990. The first large-scale solar systems, the SEGS facilities, were installed in the Mojave Desert in the 1980s and 1990s. More than 50,000 roof-top solar systems have been installed,

supported by a feed-in tariff and tax credits. But green job growth has not been able to offset the loss of jobs from other industries, burdened by mounting regulations and poor energy policy. Today California has a 12.4% unemployment rate, compared to a national average of 9.6%, flat economic growth, rapidly rising electricity rates, and must import 30% of its electricity. The mountain of AB32 regulations will only add to this deteriorating economic environment.

So what about mitigation of climate change? Today China is uses three times the coal of the U.S. and is now the top global emitter. If California is able to achieve their 2020 [target](#) of 427 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, it will be less than a 0.4% change in world emissions. Even this is meaningless, since science increasingly shows that man-made carbon emissions do not drive global temperatures. No wonder Prop 23 opponents have abandoned arguments about stopping climate change.

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