

Other view: Don't let California call the shots

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By: **Scott Lambert** , Duluth News Tribune



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The idea was wisely rejected by the Legislature in 2008 when solid evidence showed the proposal would cause product restrictions and higher prices for consumers. Not to mention an absurd form of policy-making in which California bureaucrats made laws we in Minnesota would have to follow. The proposal failed to gain enough support for a vote in either the Minnesota House or Senate.

So what's more appealing this session with California cars in Minnesota? Nothing.

Facts continue to be widely ignored by the environmental community and the proposal's chief authors.

Incoming federal emissions standards are going to be stronger. Environmentalists talk about 13 billion metric tons of carbon saved by California cars by 2025. But that number is pure fiction. It was derived by Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Climate Change Advisory Group before new draft rules were written by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the upcoming Federal CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards. What's emerging is a standard just as aggressive and, in some cases, tougher than California's. Coupled with another ignored truth — that California had to radically modify its zero-emissions standards this year — the presumed gains in carbon reduction are negated.

The agricultural community was widely criticized by environmentalists last year for being bamboozled by the auto industry into opposing the proposal. Manufacturers and dealers insisted the California standards would crush sales of Flex Fuel Vehicles, or FFVs. But FFVs are the recipients of ethanol blends — including E85, which Minnesota spent millions developing.

Leading farm groups have made their own assessment of the impact California cars would have on the ethanol industry. The result was an independent report by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association trashing the benefits of the proposal and sounding serious alarms about the downside of the idea.

The governing body of the California cars standards, the California Air Resources Board, or CARB, continues to enhance its reputation as out of touch and radical. The board has an unrelenting bias against diesel engines, and this year released its new “scoping plan,” which inserted its authority into many aspects of the lives of ordinary citizens.

Finally, the entire economy has changed. This past holiday season, anyone who watched the news was inundated with talking heads insisting that the struggling Detroit automakers had to improve their business models and get more viable. Environmentalists have ignored that and instead insist on a separate mandate applied differently in 50 separate states.

The Obama administration has all the tools needed to ensure cleaner and more-efficient cars. A strong federal mandate is smarter than a patchwork of state rules. This is the smarter course for Minnesota to follow, as well.

California has been regulating its own emissions for 20 years and has the worst air quality in the nation.

This is a worse idea in 2009.

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