

California ZEV Alliance

Preserving the California Zero-Emission Vehicle Program

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American Lung
Association of
California

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California Electric
Transportation Coalition

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California League of
Conservation Voters

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California Public
Interest Research
Group

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Coalition for Clean Air

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Natural Resources
Defense Council

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Planning and
Conservation League
Foundation

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Sierra Club

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The Steven and
Michele Kirsch
Foundation

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Union of Concerned
Scientists

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Californians Support Zero-Emission Vehicle Program 2 to 1 ZEV Alliance Urges CARB to Hold Firm on ZEV Program

Diamond Bar, May 31, 2000 — An overwhelming majority of Californians, 64 percent, supports the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Program, according to a poll released today by the California ZEV Alliance. This resounding public support for electric vehicles demonstrates that the market is ready. Now it is time for the automakers to produce the cars and follow through with their ten-year-old commitment to produce zero polluting transportation.

"The poll's findings prove that communities throughout California want cleaner air and believe the state is on the right track in setting regulatory standards that protect public health," said Ken Smith, ZEV project manager, American Lung Association of California. "With 33 California counties receiving failing grades for their ground-level ozone air pollution levels in an American Lung Association report issued just last week, it is clear that electric vehicles must be part of our air quality solution," Smith added.

In addition to the resounding support for the ZEV Program, about three-quarters, 74 percent, said they thought the 4 percent pure ZEV requirement was either about right or too low, after hearing more information about the regulation and both sides of the issue.

"Californians recognize that you can't trust the automakers to make zero-emission cars on their own, you have to require them by law to build cleaner cars," said Kevin Finney, Coalition for Clean Air. "The same thing happened with seat belts, air bags and catalytic converters. Once the government required them, the automakers found a way," he said.

Finney noted that 58 percent of poll respondents agree that the state needs to stick to the 2003 ZEV requirement because it has already been delayed once. "If it keeps getting delayed it will never happen," he added.

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Adopted in 1990, the California ZEV Program requires the six major automakers to produce 10 percent ZEVs beginning in 2003, with 4 percent pure ZEVs and 6 percent very clean gasoline or hybrid vehicles that meet tough standards to receive partial ZEV credit.

A resounding 83 percent of poll respondents identified air quality as a serious problem, and 90 percent of those polled said they think that future population growth will have a significant impact on air quality, with 70 percent agreeing that growth will have a major impact.

“Although cars are cleaner today, with more people and more cars traveling farther, California will not be able to meet its health-based air quality standards without ZEVs,” said Cecile Martin, deputy director, California Electric Transportation Coalition.

The ZEV Program has successfully promoted development of the electric cars and hybrids on the road today, and spurred research into fuel cells, which offer promise for the future, explained Roland Hwang, transportation program manager, Union of Concerned Scientists.

“Cars fueled by gasoline will always create air pollution. That’s why we need the ZEV Program to support continued development of zero-emission alternatives, like battery-electrics and fuel cells,” Hwang said, noting that fifty-eight percent of respondents concurred with this statement. The program’s requirement for 22,000 electric vehicles in 2003 is easily achievable with today’s technology, Hwang said. “And that technology is ready.”

In addition to cleaning the air, members of the ZEV Alliance, a coalition of health, environmental and public interest groups, noted that zero-emission transportation will achieve benefits including: reduced dependence on foreign oil, reduced water pollution, reduced toxic emissions, and reduced emissions of global warming gases.

Californians consume about 14 billion gallons of gasoline a year. That number will grow to between 16 and 18 billion gallons by 2010, explained V. John White, Sacramento lobbyist for the Sierra Club. Transportation accounts for 80 percent of fuel demand in California, and about 60 percent of crude oil is imported. “We need to make major progress in reducing gasoline consumption over the next 10 years; we can’t afford to wait 30. History will judge our decisions and actions over the next decade through a longer prism than short-term cost,” White said.

California’s gasoline habit also impacts water supplies, both from runoff and leaking underground storage tanks. “The unknown consequences to water quality from the transportation system in our state, including the use of petroleum-based fuels, may be as profound as the known impact to our air quality,” said Sandra Spelliscy, general counsel, Planning and Conservation League.

In California, transportation is the source of more than half of the state’s emission of carbon dioxide — a leading greenhouse gas. “Global warming will have a devastating impact on California’s environment and economy,” stated Kim Delfino, Legislative Director, CALPIRG. “Zero-emission vehicles will reduce global warming emissions by at least 70 percent.”

The firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates polled 600 registered likely general election voters in California, by telephone, May 20-23, 2000. The poll has a 4 percent margin of error.