

California ZEV Alliance

Preserving the California Zero-Emission Vehicle Program

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American Lung
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California Electric
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California League of
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California Public
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Coalition for Clean Air
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Natural Resources
Defense Council
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Planning and
Conservation League
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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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Environmental and Health Groups Call on Air Board to Stand by ZEV Program

Say Staff Recommendation is Inconsistent with Board Direction

Sacramento, January 16, 2001 — A coalition of environmental and public health groups says that a recommendation by the California Air Resources Board staff to slash requirements for automakers under the state's Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) program is not consistent with the Board's decision to uphold the regulation just a few months ago. The Board is scheduled to vote on the staff proposal on January 25.

On September 8, the air board voted unanimously to "stay the course" on the ZEV program, directing staff to explore ways to help increase markets for the advanced technology vehicles and reduce costs. Despite board members' enthusiastic support for the program and its long-term goals to clean up California's air, the staff came back just two months later with a report that recommends reducing the number of ZEVs required by 75 percent. Board members acknowledged in September that current market demand for ZEVs was not being met.

"By reducing the number of vehicles so drastically, the staff proposal would stymie investment in advanced batteries and fuel cell technologies,

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potentially crippling the entire program,” said Sandra Spelliscy, general counsel for the Planning and Conservation League. “What we need is a sustainable program that grows significantly over the next 10-15 years – delivering the dual benefits of cleaner air and declining costs.”

A representative from the American Lung Association of California pointed out that 95 percent of Californians live in areas with unhealthy air, mainly as a result of vehicle emissions.

“Our lungs are assaulted by a host of pollutants from cars, and the results are frightening,” said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, assistant vice president for government relations for the American Lung Association of California. “Air pollution is triggering asthma attacks in children and keeping them home from school – it’s even been shown to slow the development of children’s lungs. Everyone who lives in polluted areas – not just children – feels the effects of smog and toxic pollution.”

The environmental groups called on the air board to endorse a sustainable program, by at least doubling the number of true ZEVs required in the early years, and continuing an aggressive ramp-up of the program.

“The technology is proven, and there are long waiting lists from both the fleet and retail markets. Businesses and governments have made good-faith investments in vehicle components and infrastructure,” said Kevin Finney from the Coalition for Clean Air. “We expect the Board members to stand by their statements of September 8 and support a strong ZEV program.”

Dan Jacobson of the California Public Interest Research Group noted the overwhelming popular support for the ZEV program as well.

“In September, the Board displayed more than 70,000 cards and letters in support of the ZEV program, and support has continued to build,” said Jacobson. “The people of California are demanding leadership that will move us away from gasoline and all of the pollution associated with it, from refineries to tailpipes.”