

The Protect California Campaign: A Call to Environmental Commitment

Californians lost more than jobs when the economy sank in 2008. We lost ground on cutting the state's smog, water pollution, and toxic contamination. We lost forests and-wildlife to clear cutting, state parks funding was cut, and we lost transit systems that were just beginning to work the way they should.



When the bankers and speculators sent the economy into a tailspin, lobbyists for polluting industries saw an opportunity. They didn't miss a beat: They exploited fear about job loss to argue for paring back environmental regulations they never liked.

They did this across the nation, from Washington D.C. to California.

In Sacramento, in 2011, big business pressed legislators to introduce dozens of bills designed to neuter environmental progress. Most were defeated, some just barely.

A few damaging bills passed. The bills won votes from even pro-environment legislators. Their reasoning was always the same: We need jobs, so we have to sacrifice the environment.

They were wrong.

A strong and lasting economy depends upon a healthy environment. A healthy, clean environment is vital to our success.

Give up on the environment and we risk everything—now and later for future generations.

Californians get it. Firm majorities¹ are worried about the environment and support aggressive policies to cut pollution, shift to renewable energy, and move fast to reduce global warming gases. Notably, the growing “decline-to-state” voters also strongly favor actions that protect California's environment.²

Government officials are the challenge. What can average Californians do to compete with heavily funded special interests that are pushing policymakers in the wrong direction? How can we impress upon policymakers their responsibility to protect California?

The Answer: The Protect California Campaign

¹ See the Public Policy Institute of California's annual poll about Californians and the environment, published July 2011. Access at:

<http://www.ppic.org/main/pressrelease.asp?p=1136>.

² See the Tulchin Research memo on decline-to-state voters, published December 2011. Access at: <http://www.ecovote.org/sites/default/files/CLCVEF%20DTS%20Survey%20Findings.pdf>.

The Protect California Campaign was conceived and launched by Sierra Club California and other allied organizations to address this challenge. It employs information, easy-to-understand messaging, and public support to fight back against very powerful anti-environment rhetoric in Sacramento.

The Protect California Campaign will openly and proactively change the tenor in the Capitol. We will:

- **Educate** government officials and their staffs in Sacramento and in their district offices about the latest and best information on important environmental challenges that touch Californians. This includes air pollution, water pollution, toxic contamination and exposure, clear cutting, state park closures and transit funding. We will arm them with the facts.
- **Inform** opinion leaders, the public and grassroots activists, through conventional media and social media tools, about how they and their government officials can recommit to protecting California's environment.
- **Encourage** policymakers and opinion leaders to protect California's environment.

The campaign launches with a half-day legislative informational event February 1 to update legislators on the status of six key issues (air pollution, water pollution, toxics contamination, clear cutting, state parks closures, transit service). That is followed by a series of hour-long staff briefings, in the legislature and at agencies, scheduled over several weeks, by experts about these and other critical environmental issues (e.g. coastal protection, wildlife recovery, etc.). The campaign will also be supported and supplemented by opinion pieces, free media, paid media, and social media.

The campaign is not just focused in Sacramento. Grassroots members of environmental and allied organizations will help change the debate simply by expressing interest. They will visit with legislators and staff in their district offices to remind them that the drumbeat for environmental protection is not just a Sacramento phenomenon. The purpose of the campaign is to educate government officials and the public on important environmental issues. This campaign will not discuss pending, active, or planned legislation and/or electoral matters.

Join Us to Protect California

Protect California is for all Californians committed to protecting the planet and the state's natural heritage and environmental health. Sign up and play a part in the Protect California Campaign at <http://protectcalifornia.wordpress.com/> or contact:

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