

SACRAMENTO

Agency's 3 new rules on warming criticized

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(06-22) 04:00 PDT Sacramento -- State regulators approved the first new rules in California's landmark effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on Thursday, but environmentalists and some Democratic lawmakers complained that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's appointees were acting too meekly to combat global warming.

The California Air Resources Board voted to implement three new rules requiring cleaner gasoline, less methane emissions from landfills, and a ban on the sale of refrigerants for air conditioners in cars.

The vote was the first action by a board that ultimately will make scores of decisions with profound potential effects on the California economy, as the state works to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 25 percent by 2020.

But the board's moves Thursday were attacked by some, and three members, including the chairman, dissented in a 6-3 vote.

"When the Senate confirmed members of the Air Resources Board, we asked for a commitment from them to take bold actions on reducing greenhouse gas emissions," Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, said in a statement. "Unfortunately, today they flunked the test."

Perata called on Schwarzenegger to "step up and demand more from his agencies."

Aaron McLear, a spokesman for the governor, said "nobody has shown more leadership in getting this state prepared to meet emissions reductions targets than Gov. Schwarzenegger."

McLear noted Schwarzenegger has instructed state agencies to make many changes in the next few years to address global warming, such as a push to have the state Energy Commission impose new regulations requiring more energy-efficient lightbulbs.

Based on the law AB32 signed last year by Schwarzenegger, the air board is charged with developing a wide-ranging list of regulations by 2012 that will lead to the emissions cut required by 2020. But the board also was charged with developing new rules that could be implemented quickly, and that's what it decided on Thursday.

The board required oil companies to create cleaner-burning gasoline that would emit 10 percent less carbon dioxide by 2010. Other new rules will prohibit the sale of cans of a refrigerant, HFC-134a, that car owners can use to replenish automotive air conditioners, and require landfills to do a better job of



preventing methane emissions. The three items could amount to a decrease of as much as 26 million tons of greenhouse gases by 2020, or about 8 percent of the state's total goal.

Environmental groups and some Democrats argued the board should have done much more. A committee comprised of environmental justice advocates that is advising the air board had drawn up a list of more than 30 items, ranging from retiring aging and dirty power plants to requiring tractor-trailer trucks to become more efficient.

The board is considering many of those items but decided not to enact them quickly, generating complaints from many who are fighting climate change in California that Schwarzenegger's appointees were not backing up the governor's rhetoric on global warming.

"What's the message or the signal that this board sends if the best we can do is three early action measures in the next couple of years?" Tim Carmichael of the Coalition for Clean Air said during a six-hour public hearing on the issue. "This runs completely against what the rest of the world says we need to do, and the sense of urgency we should have."

The decision Thursday split the 11-member board, who are all Schwarzenegger appointees. Board chairman Robert Sawyer, and members Daniel Sperling, a UC Davis professor, and Jerry Hill, a San Mateo County supervisor, voted against the decision because they thought there should be more regulations.

"We're beginning a process that's going to save our planet," Hill said. "For that reason, I don't think it's inappropriate for us to move rapidly."

Board staff noted, however, that many of the other regulations would be pursued later.

The discussion Thursday may show how difficult it will be to build consensus on ways to curb carbon emissions in California. While Schwarzenegger clearly favors creating a market-based system to encourage businesses to reduce emissions, many Democrats and environmentalists are pushing for stronger regulations.

When Sperling, for example, suggested adding requirements to force cement-makers in the state to become more energy efficient, a board staff member noted changes to the industry could be very costly.

A spokesman for the California Chamber of Commerce, which opposed the legislation last year that enacted greenhouse gas caps, applauded the board's limited decision Thursday.

"This will be a good chance to provide a template for how things will work," Dominic DiMare.

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/06/22/BAG14QK0PV1.DTL>

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