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Climate Change Bill Will Cost California Hundreds of Millions

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Last summer Gov. Jerry Brown called those who don't agree with him that human emissions are causing the planet to overheat "trog-lodytes." No one went scurrying for a safe place after he dropped the insult.

The truth is, there are no safe places for anyone in California from the hostility of the global warming alarmist community anyway. The Legislature has made sure of that, passing a restrictive climate change bill that Brown signed Thursday. As the law of the land, SB32 will require greenhouse gas emissions to be cut to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. Wallets, bank accounts and job seekers will be yearning for the good old days when the law merely demanded 1990 emissions levels by 2020.

The radical law will have costs. The California Chamber of Commerce rightly places it on its 2016 Job Killer List. Meanwhile, buried in the bill's language is an admission of "unknown annual costs, at least in the hundreds of millions of dollars." But it's a good bet that it will cost more than that. Much more. A report from Energy and Environmental Economics in San Francisco says cutting emissions between 26 percent and 38 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 could cost \$23 billion year. The state's poor will be hit the hardest with what is essentially a regressive energy tax.

To be fair, the report estimated a range of effects, also indicating the law could save \$8 billion a year. This, of course, is absurd. Can anyone name a single instance of increased government regulation saving money?

A bizarre set of assumptions is required to believe that SB32 will create even a dime of savings. Carbon dioxide, the primary target of the cuts, is not a pollutant, such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter that are emitted from fossil fuel combustion. Cutting it will bring no cost benefits from better health.

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On the other hand, artificially increased energy prices will have a negative impact on health, because they generate economic costs. The best health care coverage known to man is economic growth, and as American Enterprise Institute economist Mark J. Perry reminds us, there is a strong correlation between life expectancy and real per capital GDP. Indeed, it's likely there is causation.

While better health and increased life expectancy aren't exactly the same, they are so intertwined that they cannot be separated.

Of course bill supporters talk about the cost of "inaction." Assemblyman Tony Thurmond, a Democrat from Richmond, says that "it's irrefutable that our failure to act will contribute to negative consequences to many children. This bill is about protecting the long-term needs of California."

To accept his argument, one has to accept as true that man's emissions of CO₂ are overheating Earth. Many believe that, but their faith doesn't make it so.

Consider the utter failure of the computer models the global warming alarmist community has based its fear tactics on. The models have predicted increased global temperatures that simply have not occurred. The projections show a sharp surge beginning in the mid-1990s, yet observed temperatures have remained virtually flat since modeling began in the late 1970s.

University of Alabama-Huntsville climate researcher John Christy, whose work shows the glaring divergence of the modeled predictions and reality, told Congress last year that even if the nation eliminated its fossil fuel emissions, there would be no change in temperatures.

"Our effect would be between five- and eight-hundredths of a degree," he said. "We would not even be able to measure any sea level change. It would be so tiny as to be immeasurable."

Sea levels, he added, have been rising for 20,000 years, and "will continue to rise no matter what anybody does about their emissions."

So if an entire nation eliminates its greenhouse emissions and the result is zero climate impact, why are lawmakers in California, and elsewhere, agitating so relentlessly for more regulation?

Simply put, many – probably most – lawmakers crave power, and hurling decrees and commands like lightning bolts from Olympus helps satisfy that desire.

These same politicians, and a good many celebrities, also thirst for media approval. They desperately want the world to recognize what they believe is their moral superiority.

Money is involved, too. Elected officials get to control an ever-growing cache of funds they can dole out to allies. Researchers receive grants to perpetuate the tale. Those outside government – think of Al Gore as an extreme example – profit from creating an environment of fear.

None of these are compelling reasons to enact public policy. But they are exactly what is driving it.