

Wednesday, November 28, 2008

The truth on AB 32 GOP right to cite flaws that governor ignored

We strongly oppose some Republican lawmakers' apparent intention to go along with tax hikes in return for a weakening of rules adopted by the state Air Resources Board to force every last resident, business, church, charitable organization and nonprofit group to pay far higher energy bills in the name of fighting climate change.

We don't like the rules. But given that California is in the middle of a deep recession, raising taxes is a rotten idea – one sure to delay recovery. Even in good times, the case for tax hikes is nonexistent. The state has the highest sales, income and gas taxes and the highest corporate taxes in the West. We should be able to make ends meet.

That said, we applaud Republicans for spotlighting Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's and the air board's absurd insistence that implementing AB 32 – the state's main anti-global warming law – will actually help the economy.

Don't believe us. Believe the academic experts hired to review the air board's economic analysis of the law's effects. One, the director of Harvard's Environmental Economics Program, said the ARB analysis was so shoddy it threatened to undercut others' efforts to fight global warming. Two others said the analysis was more akin to cheerleading than science. Another said the study made no serious attempt to evaluate AB 32's impact on 1.5 million California manufacturing jobs.

Inexplicably, their critiques were all but ignored by the Sacramento press corps. Instead, pundits lined up to hail Schwarzenegger and the air board for making the state's pioneering efforts against climate change a shining example for the world.

“Shining” is not the word that comes to mind. “Dishonest” is more like it. Thanks to Republicans for pointing this out.