

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

Our View: High cost of climate fees

First of two-part editorial

California's climate police have begun charging businesses millions of dollars in global warming fees to enforce arbitrary regulations, even as their federal counterparts move to forcibly reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions with even more costly regulations. Two bills in Congress propose yet further convoluted schemes to drive up conventional energy costs by forcing further emission restrictions.

These campaigns assume imminent global warming catastrophe, but are oblivious to growing public resistance and to mounting scientific findings disputing the predicted disaster, and certainly to the cost of waging their campaigns.

The latest rush to judgment was \$57 million in fees imposed by California's Air Resources Board, an unelected body overseeing a small army of technocrats working to force Californians to change their energy consumption habits. Unsurprisingly, in the frantic race for a solution for what increasingly appears to be a non-problem, the air board apparently can't even explain what its millions in new fees pay for.

"We asked how was the money spent," Dorothy Rothrock, vice president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, wrote in Capitol Weekly last week. It took lawyers lodging a Public Records Act request to pry loose the documents. "But these didn't show how the \$57 million was spent."

Thousands of documents later, Rothrock concluded, "we could account for only 18 percent or \$10 million... Where did \$47 million go?"

Welcome to the administrative state of faceless bureaucracies, driven by political appointees imposing ideological solutions for fanciful problems. You'll get the bill. But don't expect to know how your money is spent.

Implementing California's global warming regulations alone will cost more than \$100 billion "upfront," according to state Sen. Tom Harman, R-Costa Mesa, and another \$182 billion in lost output. A Cal State Sacramento University study found the cost to be \$3,857 for every household in California, and 1.1 million lost jobs.

It won't cost everyone. Some corporations are aboard the global warming bandwagon because, as skeptic Sen. James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma, puts it, "This is about profit, not Gaia."

When government regulation seems inevitable, some prefer to be at the table rather than on the menu. Next, we discuss those who stand to profit from these schemes, which ironically aren't likely to change global temperatures even 1 degree.