



## State Representative Kim Thatcher House District 25

### **California's Tailpipe Tax Wrong for Oregon**

February 2006

You've probably seen news reports about the new California emissions standards Governor Kulongoski is imposing on Oregon. The Oregon Environmental Quality Commission held a few public hearings around the state and will no doubt make these new standards the law of the land in the coming months.

This is the wrong time and the wrong way to go about changing such an important state policy. As a member of the House Transportation Committee last year and the owner of a transportation contracting company, I can tell you these new rules have not been given the public scrutiny they deserve.

We are talking about additional restrictions on all new cars starting in 2009 in an effort to reduce air pollution. Sounds harmless enough until you look beyond the sound bites. The restrictions mean thousands of dollars added to the cost of a new vehicle; which makes this an expensive tailpipe tax.

The timing is all wrong. There are lawsuits at the state level over the way the Governor has shoved this program through without the legislature's approval. Litigation is also pending at the federal level which could overturn the standards California is using. So why is Oregon rushing into these new rules when the courts might throw them out?

The process for implementing these standards has also become more about politics than good policy. The legislature specifically told the Department of Environmental Quality NOT to adopt the emissions standards. The Governor told DEQ to ignore the legislature and do it anyway.

Auto makers are already putting cleaner models on the market every year offering consumers several choices of electric cars, hybrids and others. Incentives are more effective than forcing the industry to make drastic changes. The law of supply and demand works better than mandates.

Oregon is developing alternatives to gasoline with cleaner burning biofuels.

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Many light duty trucks and SUVs, which run on diesel, won't be available in Oregon because they can't meet the new California standards. That will hurt the producers of biodiesel who are starting to find their niche in our state. Besides, recent federal reports show air pollution from vehicles has decreased, not increased.

This decision regarding emissions is too important to be left to a committee appointed by the Governor. Historically, when Oregonians have faced such critical decisions, publicly debated resolutions have either come directly from the voters or from their elected representatives in the legislature. Whether it's the bottle bill, public beaches, vote by mail or doctor assisted suicide, Oregonians are leaders, not followers. We should not let the Governor follow California's questionable edict and therefore dictate what kind of cars Oregonians own and drive.

The agency is accepting public comment through Friday, so take the opportunity to give them your thoughts. Write to DEQ, Air Quality Division 811 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., Portland, OR 97204 or email [Oregon.LEV@deq.state.or.us](mailto:Oregon.LEV@deq.state.or.us).

(You can reach Rep Thatcher at her capitol office 503-986-1425 or email [rep.kimthatcher@state.or.us](mailto:rep.kimthatcher@state.or.us) )

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kim Thatcher', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Kim Thatcher  
State Representative  
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