

## Wiggins: Going green – good for the environment, economy

Contributed by Sen. Patricia Wiggins  
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California is experiencing its worst budget crisis in memory, if not in the history of the state, and Democrats in the capitol are working to find a solution – a permanent one. That means spending cuts and revenue increases.

But earlier this month, legislative Republicans released a set of demands they said would have to be met before they’d even discuss raising revenue – hardly an appropriate way to negotiate a budget.

One of their demands, in particular, stood out to me: That California delay implementation of our ground-breaking global warming law, AB 32, which was signed into law by Gov. Schwarzenegger in 2006.

Seeing as how only one Republican voted for AB 32 as it passed through the legislature, it’s no shock that they’re now trying to delay this first-in-the-nation law. What is sad, however, is how out of touch their thinking is.

California has led the country in pursuing new laws to address climate change and needs to lead the country in developing a 21st century economy. While my Republican colleagues insist that implementation of AB 32 will hurt the economy, several companies are busy proving them otherwise by looking and moving forward.

With the imminent passage of a federal climate change law, numerous large businesses are working to mitigate global climate change by reducing their own emissions and impacts, while at the same time growing their companies.

For example, the multi-national chemical giant Dupont has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions 72 percent below 1990 levels – not only better for the planet, it’s also helped the company save over \$3 billion.

In 2005, General Electric, the third largest company in the world, revealed its new business strategy: “ecomagination.” The plan was, and is, to develop and sell clean technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce environmental impacts.

It’s not all about corporate social responsibility for the 128-year-old company, though.

When GE’s chief executive officer says “Green is green,” he’s also referring to the color of money. Profits from the “ecomagination” products have increased from \$10 billion in 2005 to \$18 billion in 2008.

Even Wal-Mart is on board, promoting compact fluorescent light bulbs, requiring suppliers to reduce packaging, and installing solar panels on the roofs of some its stores. Again, this may appear to be a marketing strategy, but in the end, it improves the bottom line while reducing emissions – good for the economy and good for the environment.

In the past month, we watched as the three major American car companies appeared before Congress requesting a bailout at the expense of the taxpayers. I do not wish to see the automakers fail, per se, in part because of the devastating impact that their collapse would have on countless working families as well as the overall economy.

Nor should we believe the rhetorical tirades of Congressional Republicans who have tried to pin much of the blame on the workers and their labor unions.

It’s important to recognize that the primary reason that the Big Three slid towards financial failure because they lacked the foresight to innovate and to lead the way toward development of new technologies that could have improved their products and improved their bottom line. As their competitors moved forward, they remained stagnant.

California has always led in environmental protection, and we are well positioned to lead the way for the new green economy.

We need to look forward, not back. And we must continue to embrace strong environmental laws that protect our health and safety while encouraging businesses to innovate and improve efficiencies.

Congressional Representative Hilda Solis (D-El Monte), author of the 2007 federal Green Jobs Act and President-elect Barack Obama’s choice to become the next U.S. Secretary of Labor, estimates that green-job training could create as many as three million new jobs in the next decade.

I encourage my Republican colleagues to consider the possibilities – and to embrace changes that can be a win-win for businesses, the economy and the planet.

Patricia Wiggins represents California’s Second Senate District, which includes Lake County.

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