California's Low-Carb Diet Gouges Car Buyers

by Kenneth Green

(NAPSA)—As levels of traditional air pollutants like smog and soot continue to decline, regulators are setting their sights on the regulation of benign gases claimed to cause climate change—like carbon dioxide, usually referred to as CO_2.

California's Consumer Scam

California's regulators recently passed new rules that aim to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of the Golden States' motor vehicles. The evidence suggests the California Air Resources Board's new rule, like its electric-car mandate of the 1990s, offers great economic pain for no environmental gain.

The board's latest decree sets a much lower standard for the amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted by each model year's new cars beginning in 2009. Ultimately, the required reduction in vehicle carbon dioxide emissions for the fleet of vehicles sold into California will reach a stiff 30 percent below current levels by 2016.

Unfortunately, the benefits of this low carbon dioxide diet don't amount to much. The required 30 percent reduction in CO_2 won't even put a dent in global warming. Even taking every car in California off the road would reduce current global emissions of carbon dioxide by less than ¼ of one percent—a reduction that would have virtually no impact on the climate.

In fact, at current emission levels, reducing all motor fuel emissions in the entire United States by 30 percent would reduce global carbon emissions by only 1.5 percent.

With CO_2 emissions in developing countries like China and India far outpacing those in developed countries, the environmental impact of the new rules are likely to be undetectable in the long run.

The costs of the new proposal border on the prohibitive. When the regulators proposed the new rule, they argued that motorists would save big at the gasoline pump—an estimated $1,703 over the life of each new passenger car sold in 2016.

When taking out all of the regulators' unsupportable assumptions, a study by Sierra Research found that new car buyers in 2016 would lose $3,357 over the lifetime of the vehicle compared to a no-regulation alternative.

While the new rules apply only to California, they're likely to increase new car prices for new car buyers throughout the United States since 20 percent of new-cars are sold to Californians.

With that big a market at stake, automakers will have little choice but to apply the requirement to virtually every car sold in the U.S. rather than go to the trouble and expense of fragmenting their production for two separate markets—California as one and the remaining 49 states as the other.

Unless one is gullible enough to believe that changing human actions through government coercion will save the Earth from the global warming disasters envisioned in the movie "The Day After Tomorrow," California's new CO_2 regulations are ill-advised. Their costs are too high and their benefits nearly non-existent.

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