

SB 719 (Machado) - San Joaquin Valley Air Board Reform

Fact Sheet

THE PROBLEM

The San Joaquin Valley is one of the most polluted regions in America, often beating out Los Angeles as the air basin with the worst air quality. The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District's Governing Board ["Valley Air Board"] is in a prime position to clean the Valley's air, thereby improving the health of the Valley's children, communities and economy. Here are some facts:

- 1 in 3 families in the San Joaquin Valley has a member with a respiratory ailment.
- 1 out of 5 of the region's children and 1 in 8 adults suffer from asthma.
- There are more than 1,200 premature deaths each year in the Valley due to particulate matter pollution.
- High levels of exposure to harmful ozone and particulate matter is estimated to cost Valley residents \$3.2 billion annually in health costs from heart and lung diseases.

The San Joaquin Valley faces one of the largest air quality challenges in the nation. Despite its vast size, open space, and low population density, air pollution is concentrated in the Valley environment. The rate of progress on improving air quality in the region has been painfully slow and there is still much to be done. SB 719 will address the Valley's air pollution burden and put the region on the path to clean air.



THE SOLUTION

Specifically, SB 719 (Machado) will expand the Valley Air Board membership from 11 to 15 members, to include additional representation from urban areas, rural areas and public health experts. Key features of the legislation include:

- It gives more Valley communities a voice on the District Board. The region's major population centers will gain a level of representation commensurate with their populations, providing the largest cities in the region, Bakersfield, Fresno, Stockton, Visalia, and Modesto, with two rotating seats. Despite a population of nearly one half million, Fresno went from 1992 until 2007 without a representative on the Board. Mid-sized and smaller cities will also be better represented with three rotating seats, instead of two.
- The bill will strengthen the District Board's scientific capacity. While the District staff has good technical capacity in modeling air pollution, developing control measures, and enforcement, it has no experts in the field of the health impacts of air pollution. In addition, none of the board members are currently selected on the basis of their scientific knowledge in any field, despite the ongoing need to make judgments about complex scientific issues. In recognition of this need for scientific expertise, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) has at minimum two seats for scientific experts. Drawing off the success of ARB's approach, SB 719 provides a place for two health experts on the Board: a practicing physician and a scientist, both with expertise in the health effects of air pollution.
- Lastly, the Valley Air Board will remain "local" under this legislation. Valley residency is required in order to be appointed to the Board, which will overwhelmingly remain composed of local elected officials.

VALLEY RESIDENTS FAVOR THIS SOLUTION

According to a July 2007 Public Policy Institute of California poll, 8 in 10 Valley residents favor the idea of including professionals on the Valley Air Board with knowledge of health and environmental issues. By political party, 82% of Republicans, 79% of Democrats, and 78% of Independents are similarly supportive; as are 75% of North County residents and 77% of South County residents. In addition, 80% of whites and 71% of Latinos want health and environmental expertise on the Valley Air Board.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

SB 719 is a proactive step forward for the San Joaquin Valley's 3.7 million residents and for the Air District, which covers a larger geographic area than any other air district in the state. As one of the poorest but most rapidly growing regions of the country, the Valley struggles daily with the need to balance economic opportunity with the protection of public health. By expanding community representation and enhancing the scientific capacity of the District Board, SB 719 will help ensure this balance is achieved.

Current Valley Air Board Composition		
County Supervisors	Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin	8
Cities (Rotating)	1 – Large, 1 – Medium, 1 – Small Rotates from North, Central and Southern regions of Air District	3
Total		11

Proposed Valley Air Board Composition (SB 719-Machado)		
County Supervisors	Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin – NO CHANGE	8
Large Cities (Rotating)	Rotating seats among cities with a population over 100,000. Currently includes: Bakersfield, Fresno, Stockton, Visalia, and Modesto.	2
Small/Medium Cities (Rotating)	Rotating seats among cities with a population less than 100,000.	3
Health & Science Experts	1 – Medical Doctor, 1 – Scientist Both must have expertise on health impacts of air pollution and be San Joaquin Valley residents.	2
Total		15

SUPPORTERS

(PARTIAL LIST)

- American Lung Association of California – California League of Conservation Voters
- California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation – Californians for Pesticide Reform
- Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment – Central Valley Air Quality (CVAQ) Coalition
- Clean Power Campaign – Coalition for Clean Air – Community Action to Fight Asthma
- Concerned Residents of Lockwood Valley – Diocese of Stockton – Dolores Huerta Foundation
- El Comité Para El Bienestar de Earlimart (Committee for the Well Being of Earlimart)
- Environment California – Fresno Madera Medical Society – Fresno Metro Ministry
- Grayson Neighborhood Council – Latino Issues Forum – Medical Advocates for Healthy Air
- Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition – Natural Resources Defense Council
- Planning and Conservation League – Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP) Initiative
- SEIU-UHW – Sierra Club California – Steven and Michele Kirsch Foundation – TriCounty Watchdogs
- Tulare County Asthma Coalition – Union of Concerned Scientists

NEWSPAPER ENDORSEMENTS

- Bakersfield Californian*
- Fresno Bee*
- Modesto Bee*
- Sacramento Bee*
- San Francisco Chronicle*
- Stockton Record*