

CAPITOL
ALERT

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Brown signs renewable energy bill

HIGHLIGHTS

Law requires major increase in electricity derived from renewable sources

Petroleum reduction measure stripped from bill amid controversy



BY DAVID SIDERS

dsiders@sacbee.com

One month after the oil industry and moderate Democrats in the Assembly dealt Gov. Jerry Brown a rare defeat on major climate legislation, the governor on Wednesday signed into law a less sweeping greenhouse gas reduction measure.

Though the bill remains significant – requiring California to dramatically increase the proportion of electricity the state derives from renewable sources – it no longer includes a petroleum reduction goal stripped from the legislation before passage.

An effort to increase California's greenhouse gas reduction target also fell apart in the Legislature.

Brown, speaking at Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, said "California is taking the lead" on climate change, while emphasizing short-term health benefits of reducing pollution.

Video: Jerry Brown signs climate bill, boosting renewable energy

Law requires major increase in electricity derived from renewable sources. Petroleum reduction measure stripped from bill amid controversy. Video courtesy of governor's office.

Amy Chance
Political editor
achance@sacbee.com
[@Amy_Chance](https://twitter.com/Amy_Chance)

Dan Smith
Capitol bureau chief
smith@sacbee.com
[@DanielSnowSmith](https://twitter.com/DanielSnowSmith)

Jim Miller
California policy and politics
Capitol Alert editor
jmiller@sacbee.com
[@jimmiller2](https://twitter.com/jimmiller2)

David Siders
Brown administration
dsiders@sacbee.com
[@davidsiders](https://twitter.com/davidsiders)

Christopher Cadelago
California politics and health care
ccadelago@sacbee.com
[@ccadelago](https://twitter.com/ccadelago)

Jeremy B. White
Legislature
jwhite@sacbee.com
[@capitolalert](https://twitter.com/capitolalert)

Alexei Koseff
Insider Edition editor
akoseff@sacbee.com
[@akoseff](https://twitter.com/akoseff)

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Brown, who has made climate change a priority

of his administration, has said he and the California Air Resources Board will use executive authority and existing law to pursue emission-reduction programs on their own. And Brown used his appearance in Los Angeles, in the state's largest media market, to push back against efforts to increase oversight of the controversial board.

With a separate bill to give the Senate Rules Committee and the speaker of the Assembly one appointment each to the ARB now sitting on his desk, Brown said, "I love the Legislature, but I don't want to entrust you with too much power, at least on a daily basis.

"You set the big story, and then just let this executive branch carry out your desires, and you can check it every now and then, or check it regularly."

The bill enacted Wednesday will require California to increase to 50 percent from one-third the proportion of electricity the state derives from wind, solar and other renewable sources. It also requires the state to double the energy efficiency of buildings over the next 15 years.

The bill provides for the creation of thousands of new charging stations for electric vehicles. The lack of convenient charging stations – and anxiety about the vehicles' cost and range – have kept sales below levels proponents consider attainable.

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León told reporters on Tuesday that increasing the availability of charging stations would make electric vehicles available "to the masses."

"For the very first time in history, we have a

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golden opportunity to transform the transportation sector,” he said.

At the signing ceremony Wednesday, de León recalled a time when smog was as much a Los Angeles landmark as the nearby Hollywood sign.

“We accepted that air pollution was the cost of doing business,” he said. “Today, we prove otherwise.”

He called clean air “a universal right.”

To gain passage of the bill, Brown and de León removed a provision to reduce petroleum use in motor vehicles by 50 percent by 2030 following intense lobbying from California’s oil industry and resistance from moderate Democrats in the Assembly.

The bill’s enactment came over objections from Republican lawmakers, who said the cost of achieving the bill’s goals would be too burdensome.

“Senate Republicans share the goal of clean air and reduced emissions in California,” Senate Republican Leader Jean Fuller, of Bakersfield, said in a prepared statement. “But we have to get there in a way that is still affordable for California families and small businesses.”

David Siders: 916-321-1215, @davidsiders