

# Brown signs aggressive climate change bill

By Michael R. Blood and Judy Lin, AP

Gov. Jerry Brown signed an ambitious climate change bill on Wednesday, aiming to increase the state's use of renewable electricity to 50 percent and make existing buildings twice as energy-efficient by 2030.

"The goal is clear, and California is in the forefront," Brown said at a signing ceremony at the hilltop Griffith Observatory, where a hazy downtown Los Angeles provided the backdrop.

Brown tried for an even stronger measure that would have also directed state regulators to enforce a 50 percent drop in petroleum use in the next 15 years, but oil interests defeated that part of the package.

He characterized the loss as a short-term setback and insisted that the world needs to wean itself off fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

"What has been the source of our prosperity now becomes the source of our ultimate destruction if we don't get off it. And that is so difficult," Brown said.

The Legislature approved the watered-down SB350 in the final hours of the legislative session on Sept. 11.

The measure does not specify how California will achieve these far-reaching goals, deferring the details to the state's Air Resources Board, Energy Commission and Public Utilities Commission. The boards' members are mostly appointed by the governor and have broad influence over the state's economic life.

Lawmakers blamed a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign by oil companies, which raised fears of job losses, for defeating the petroleum reduction requirement.

Both houses are controlled by Democrats, but Brown accused Republicans of failing to take action to slow global warming. He recalled that Ronald Reagan, a Republican, was California's governor when the state created the Air Resources Board in response to the smog in Los Angeles, and that Republican President Richard Nixon signed the Clean Air Act.

"That was a time when Republicans really got it. We hope they are going to come back to the good old days of Reagan and Nixon, when people cared about clean air and clean water," he said.

Brown, a Democrat, began the year with a vow to push the most aggressive greenhouse-gas emissions benchmark in North America through the Legislature.

His goal builds on landmark legislation signed by Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006. That legislation established the first U.S. program to cap and trade emissions as a way to reduce pollutants to 1990 levels by 2020.

That program, second only to the European Union's in size, imposes extra costs on polluting businesses and has kept the state on track to get a third of its electricity from renewable sources in five more years.

Brown took his campaign around the world, even meeting with the pope in July. But he lost a key political battle among moderate Democrats in Sacramento amid intense lobbying by the oil industry and California's utilities.

Some lawmakers were willing to accept forced cuts in petroleum use if the Legislature could have more power over the Air Resources Board, which has been implementing the greenhouse gas emissions law.

But Brown refused to give up what he sees as his executive authority.

Brown said cleaner-running cars and energy-efficient appliances will improve the environment, but he warned that the world's coming transition from carbon-producing fuels to solar, wind and other renewable energies will be difficult.

"I never want to minimize the task ahead," he said. "It's not going to be easy, and it's not going to come overnight. There is no quick, one thing you can do."