

# Broad Coalition Asks California Governor Brown To Reconsider Cap-and-Trade

by  
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SAN FRANCISCO - July 28 — A broad coalition of over 40 nonprofit groups concerned about the effectiveness of California's climate change plans is pressing California Governor Jerry Brown to reconsider the proposed cap-and-trade program. The coalition, which includes groups from around the nation and the world, with the largest number based in California, is urging Brown to reduce greenhouse gas pollution where it makes the most sense for public health instead of where it is cheapest for heavy industrial polluters.

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Margaret Jordan, of the Richmond Progressive Alliance, said "Air pollution is worst in communities of color and low-income communities. Here in Richmond, we live right next door to Chevron and the asthma rates show the impact of our polluted air."

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"When polluters like Chevron are required to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming, other types of air pollution are also reduced. This is an opportunity for California to show the rest of the nation how to improve public health while tackling global warming. We need those greenhouse gas reductions to happen in the communities that are most polluted, so the health benefits go to the people who really need them."

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Cap-and-trade is a system that allows regulated industrial facilities to either reduce their greenhouse gas emissions or buy the right to pollute from another firm that has spare permits. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) is recommending that California adopt a cap-and-trade program and that firms also be allowed to purchase offsets instead of eliminating a portion of their emissions. Offsets are projects that propose to cut greenhouse gas emissions or sequester greenhouse gases at another location, perhaps outside the state or even outside the country.

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"Capping greenhouse gas emissions makes sense," Jordan continued. "The cap part of cap-and-trade is the part that reduces pollution, but trading and offsets are just ways for polluters to make money while continuing to pollute. Cap-and-trade lets polluters decide where, or even if, they will reduce their own pollution. What sense does that make?"

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Kirsten Schwind, Program Director of Bay Localize in Oakland, commented that "Bay Localize opposes cap and trade because we think California can do better. When the European Union tried out cap and trade, big utility corporations gamed the system to make windfall profits, and it didn't seriously reduce emissions. We need to fund public sector programs that build green infrastructure and create jobs instead of windfall profits."

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Ananda Lee Tan, North American Program Coordinator of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), is concerned that California's cap-and-trade program increases perverse incentives for major climate polluters like waste burning and landfills. "By providing little to no regulation of carbon intensive industries like incinerators and landfill gas projects, and allowing other industries to purchase pollution permits and offset their emissions, cap-and-trade would both increase pollution burdens for communities in California and help finance dirty energy elsewhere in the world. Such allowances would also undermine the growth of thousands of jobs in the recycling sector - jobs that actually serve to reduce vast amounts of climate pollution."

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ARB is set to reconsider its recommendation to adopt a cap-and-trade program on August 24th. The groups urged Governor Brown to steer ARB toward more effective greenhouse gas reduction strategies.

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“For four decades California has improved the quality of the air we breathe through successful direct pollution reduction measures. These tried-and-true measures should not be put aside in favor of reliance on untested market systems and problematic offset programs,” said Brian Nowicki, California Climate Policy Director of the Center for Biological Diversity. “As it stands, the proposed cap-and-trade program would allow oil refineries to purchase carbon offset credits from out-of-state logging operations as a substitute for reducing pollution here in California, and would create an incentive to log forests, including whole live trees, for energy production.”

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