

A good time to rethink

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Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is seeking a delay of a new rule to require 33 percent of power used by utilities to be from renewable sources like wind and solar power. We urge the governor to use the extra time to rethink the entire idea that state government should impose such uneconomical and unreliable requirements.

Mr. Schwarzenegger has asked the state Air Resources Board to postpone adopting the rule until September, reported the Capitol Weekly, a newspaper covering the capitol and politics. The rule was expected to be adopted this month.

The delay was requested to enable the governor to continue discussions with legislative leaders on related legislation. His request is the latest in a "series of confusing twists and turns related to what is called the Renewable Portfolio Standard," that establishes how much renewable-energy power the state's major utilities provide, the Capitol Weekly reported. Existing law requires a 20-percent standard, but no utility has met even that level yet, the paper reported.

The heart of the dispute isn't about which standard is preferable, but rather how much renewable energy must be produced in California as opposed to imported from out of state.

The administration has favored a greater proportion of out-of-state renewable energy than have environmentalists. Mr. Schwarzenegger vetoed legislation last year because of limits it would have placed on out-of-state sources. At that time he issued an executive order requiring the 33-percent threshold, and the ARB was instructed to develop the regulation.

We welcome the delay in imposing an even more unreachable mandate on utilities, even if it occurs for the wrong reason. A delay would be a good time for the governor to rethink forcing such conversions, which are economically questionable and put the state at risk by relying on power sources that can ebb and flow as the wind dies and skies become cloudy.

Environmentalists champion ever-higher requirements for a transition from reliable fossil-fuel sources to so-called renewable sources. The problem with that is it ignores costs and practicality.