

PG&E opposes initiative to block state climate law

Rick Daysog, Sacramento Bee, 7-7-10

California businesses are beginning to pick sides in the initiative battle over the state's landmark climate change law.

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. on Tuesday said it will oppose the November ballot initiative, which seeks to suspend Assembly Bill 32, a law that mandates statewide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

PG&E joins corporations such as Levi Strauss and Co. and eBay Inc. in opposing the rollback.

"Studies show that unchecked climate growth could cost California's economy alone tens of billions of dollars a year in losses to agriculture, tourism and other sectors," said Peter Darbee, PG&E's chairman and CEO.

"Thoughtful and balanced implementation of AB 32 is one of the most important opportunities we have to avoid this costly outcome while spurring new clean-tech investment, innovation and job creation in California."

But a coalition funded by Texas oil companies and California manufacturers wants the law's implementation suspended until the state unemployment rate, now at 12.4 percent, drops to 5.5 percent. Proponents of the initiative, Proposition 23, say implementing the climate change law will cost the state 1.1 million jobs.

A PG&E spokeswoman said it's too early to say whether PG&E will contribute financially to the initiative debate.

Californians for Clean Energy and Jobs, which opposes the rollback, said it received about \$8 million in commitments. Michael Mantell, the group's finance chairman, declined to identify potential donors but said they come from a diverse group of California businesses, trade groups and environmental organizations.

The California Jobs Initiative, which has spearheaded Proposition 23, has raised more than \$3.1 million so far. About half has come from two Texas oil companies, Tesoro Corp. and Valero Energy Corp.

Jobs Initiative spokeswoman Anita Mangels said her group has the backing of diverse business interests, including the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Business and the California Manufacturers and Technology Association.