

Voters could chill global warming law

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It looks likely California voters will have a chance to restrain out-of-control government attempts to regulate and tax the state into economic oblivion.

More than 800,000 petition signatures have been submitted to qualify for the November ballot a measure to freeze California's Draconian global warming law. Almost twice the number required signatures were collected, so it looks as if voters will have the opportunity to at least postpone the economy-damaging effects of Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006.

The California Jobs Initiative temporarily would suspend arbitrary regulations being drafted by the state Air Resources Board to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The initiative would halt implementation until the state unemployment rate drops to 5.5 percent for one year. It is 12.6 percent today.

The number of signatures collected indicates "an unmistakable message: People want to have a say in whether or not the state should be allowed to kill over a million jobs and impose billions of dollars in higher energy and other costs on California families," said Jon Coupal, president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.

AB32 would drive energy costs disproportionately high for small businesses and low-income communities. "The California Jobs Initiative will help protect those small businesses, those communities and those jobs until the economy improves," said Julian Canete, California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce executive director, representing 720,000 Hispanic-owned businesses.

Studies show the regulations will mean a \$3.7-billion increase in gasoline and diesel costs, up to a 60-percent increase in electricity costs, add \$50,000 to new home prices and cost \$143 billion for a cap-and-trade auction, according to initiative backers.

Even some who support the law conclude its price is too high. "While we support the goals of AB 32, implementation at this time would be a death knell for many small businesses that have been hard hit by the prolonged recession," said John Kabateck, executive director of the National Federation of Business/California, representing 20,000 small businesses.

We welcome a fall campaign when voters can weigh AB32's purported benefits against its economic costs.