

Oil interests mislead about vehicle monitoring

David Siders, Sacramento Bee, 9-1-15

The California Drivers Alliance, a group funded by the Western States Petroleum Association, is running a TV ad opposing Senate Bill 350, which would require the state to reduce petroleum use in motor vehicles by 50 percent and increase the proportion of electricity derived from renewable sources such as wind and solar.

The bill, a sweeping effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, has become one of the most contentious bills at the Capitol this year. After the Senate passed the measure, oil companies released a flood of advertising targeting moderate Democrats in the Assembly, which has yet to act.

In the TV ad, a man standing in front of a parked car addresses the camera directly.

Text: The Gas Restriction Act of 2015 will restrict the use of gas and diesel in California by 50 percent.

This law will limit how often we can drive our own cars.

The state will also be collecting and monitoring our personal driving habits and tracking how much gas we use.

They're now reviewing regulations to force automakers to include data monitoring systems in all cars so that regulators will be able to penalize and fine us if we drive too much or use too much gas.

Say 'no' to the new California driving restrictions. Go to DontTakeMyGas.org.

Analysis: Senate Bill 350 grants the California Air Resources Board broad authority to reduce petroleum use in California, and it is possible – in the same way that the world is full of possibilities – that the state will one day penalize and fine people who drive too much or use too much gas.

But SB 350 does not do that. Nor do the regulations CARB currently is reviewing.

The ad focuses on proposed changes to the state's vehicle data-monitoring program. The proposal is going forward separately from SB 350 – which is not called the Gas Restriction Act of 2015 – and the ad's claims about its effects are misleading.

The Air Resources Board has long required onboard diagnostic equipment on cars and trucks in California to monitor emission control systems, first adopting regulations in 1989.

CARB officials have recently proposed expanding data monitoring to measure the fuel consumption of cars.

But CARB's proposal is to store data in aggregate form, without identifying individual vehicle owners or providing detailed information about trip-by-trip behavior.

It would be voluntary for drivers to participate, and there is no mention of penalties or fines.