

# Don't mess with California

**Cosmo Garvin, Sacramento News & Review, 4-15-10**

They do things a little different in Texas. Like a lot of us here in California, activists at Credo Action were disappointed to learn of the Texas-based Valero Energy oil company's decision to meddle with our state environmental laws. The company is bankrolling a ballot measure which—if qualified and approved by voters this November—would suspend California's hard-won climate change law, Assembly Bill 32.

So the Credo folks sent a couple of e-mails to Valero CEO Bill Klesse, asking him to knock it off. No big deal. "Please stop your attacks on the A.B. 32 in California. Thank you," read one of the messages.

Most CEOs just ignore these activists and other riffraff. But Klesse did a very un-CEO thing and fired back. "I assume you realize that we are discussing CO2. Many people do not realize this is a CO2 law. We are not willing to ruin our economy, our business, your lifestyle and our country over AB-32. Sent from my iPhone." In another e-mail he wrote simply, "I assume you realize that this is about CO2 and not pollution."

There you have it, carbon dioxide is no longer pollution. The CEO of Valero says so. "It was sort of a Texas response," noted Credo president Michael Kieschnick. "You wouldn't see that kind of thing from the corporate lawyers at Chevron."

Credo is a mobile-phone carrier which uses donations from its customers to support an array of progressive causes. Marriage equality, health-care reform, not torturing people—that sort of thing.

Now Credo is joining with the Courage Campaign to organize a boycott of Valero gasoline, until Klesse's company turns off the anti-A.B. 32 campaign cash spigot. The point is to convince Valero that "They'll lose more business than they would gain by being able to pollute," Kieschnick said.

About 60,000 California Credo members have pledge to boycott Valero gasoline, and Credo has sent out about 1,200 "Boycott Valero" bumper stickers. You can put them on your bike, too. (Go to [www.boycottvalero.com](http://www.boycottvalero.com) to find out more.)

But will it work? Kieschnick says his group doesn't get involved in too many boycott campaigns. He said Credo has worked against JPMorgan Chase's financing of coal-fired power plants and mountaintop removal mining. And boycotts nudged Daimler-Benz to eventually pay reparations for slave labor used in Germany during World War II.

"For a boycott to succeed, you have to have a lot of things lined up." Among the most important factors, "Your target has to be doing something really horrific," Kieschnick explained. Apparently Valero's actions qualify as "really horrific." Somewhere on the scale between running a sooty power plant and abetting the Holocaust.