



Physicians played a key role in the campaign to preserve California's landmark Global Warming Solutions Act, AB 32. Former LACMA president Dr. Ralph DiLiberio is pictured in the gray jacket.

URGENT CARE:

Medical Support for Clean Air

Critical decisions being made in Sacramento will affect SoCal air quality

BY JANE WARNER

PHYSICIANS IN increasing numbers are joining the movement to protect and strengthen state and federal air quality rules and to call public attention to the benefits of reduced chronic illness and premature deaths from doing so. Makes sense, since physicians and other health professionals see first-hand the impacts of dirty air on a child with asthma, a young woman with lung cancer or a senior battling chronic lung disease. And, there is no better time than now for physicians to raise their voices for policies that protect individual and public health.

From the Federal Clean Air Act to California's groundbreaking clean vehicle regulations, many of the most important state and federal laws have been under attack recently from both industry and political opponents. These threats have demonstrated the strong need for physicians to speak out and make the connection between clean air regulations and improved health and quality of life. Physicians provide a trusted voice that can focus on the concrete health ben-

efits of addressing pollution from cars, trucks and other sources. Now, as California moves forward to adopt another precedent-setting regulation to ratchet down on air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from cars, physicians have another important opportunity to engage.

A critical decision is being made in Sacramento later this year that could have a dramatic impact on improving air quality and reducing the burden of asthma in California. The California Air Resources Board is in the process of updating the state's emissions standards for cars that will be in effect as far as 2025. These next generation standards, called "advanced clean car standards," will significantly cut air pollution, reduce greenhouse gases and increase the number of zero- and near-zero emission cars. These standards not only will promote battery electric, plug-in electric and hydrogen fuel cell technologies, but also advance cleaner conventional technologies. The American Lung Association is organizing physicians to show support

for these important standards to clean up the air, and has released a new study, *The Road To Clean Air* that quantifies the tremendous health benefits that these standards can provide.

"Physicians are well respected, educated opinion leaders who can cut through the noise of special interests and speak directly to what matters most: the health of our kids, our families, friends and communities," said John Rodgers, Chairman, American Lung Association in California Board of Directors. "Californians need to hear from physicians that strong vehicle standards are preventative medicine."

This critical update in the vehicle emission standards is the latest step in a decades-long progression of stronger clean air regulations in our state resulting from leadership by the California Air Resources Board, the State Legislature and the Governor and supported by health and medical advocates. California created the first tailpipe emission standards in 1966 and has continued to be the leader in smog control. For more than forty years, the American Lung Asso-

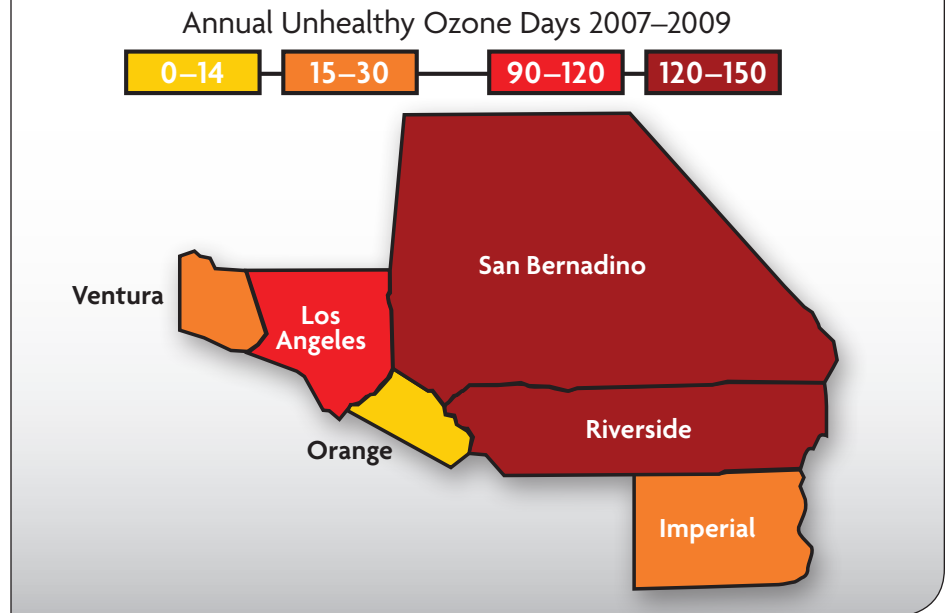
ciation in California and other health advocates have supported California's cutting-edge rules to protect communities from harmful vehicle emissions. Some key California milestones along the road to clean air include:

- First requirements for pollution-reducing catalytic converters to be installed in new cars, 1966
- The nation's first emission standard for nitrogen oxides, a key component of smog, 1971
- Adopting the Smog Check program, 1984
- Enacting the Low Emission Vehicle and Zero Emission Vehicle programs, 1990
- Requirements for lead-free gasoline and low-sulfur diesel fuels, 1990s
- The nation's first vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards, 2004

These essential improvements to reduce exposure to harmful emissions faced significant challenges along the way, but health and medical support has proven to be critical to advancing tough clean air campaigns. The 2004 effort to support adoption by the Air Resources Board of the first-ever motor vehicle greenhouse gas standards saw more than 150 medical professionals join in a statement urging the Board to fight climate change with cleaner vehicles. Just last year, those standards became the basis for a national program. As evidenced by the landslide defeat on the November 2010 ballot of Proposition 23, the initiative that would have overturned the state's landmark global warming reduction law, the California medical community is a powerful voice that can override assaults to clean air laws, even in the face of well-funded opposition.

Recent data on the health impacts of air pollution in California and the rising prevalence of asthma provide a clear and compelling health rationale for further ratcheting down on vehicle pollution emissions. While the decades of progress noted earlier have resulted in substantial reductions in air pollution levels and numbers of unhealthy days each year, California still remains home to some of the worst air in the United States, and it is literally killing thousands every year. The American Lung Association's annual State of the Air report (www.stateoftheair.org) for 2011 found that over 90 percent of Californians live in counties that receive failing grades

American Lung Association State of the Air 2011



for air quality—noting that unhealthy smog affects some Southern California residents for as much as four months per year. More than 5,000 Southern California residents die prematurely each year due to air pollution according to state Air Resources Board research.

At the same time, asthma rates are rising. The latest national surveillance data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that between 2001 and 2009 the proportion of Americans with asthma increased by over 12 percent, or 4.3 million cases. Asthma rates grew among all demographic groups. The CDC reported that one out of every seven Americans living with asthma required urgent outpatient care as a result of an asthma attack. In the Los Angeles region, this means that over 140,000 residents could experience a health emergency due to asthma. These are frightening, costly experiences for children, families and everyone touched by asthma.

Health professionals understand there is a broad spectrum of benefits to cleaner vehicles on California roads—from healthier air in local communities to savings at the pump to energy security. To realize those benefits, public health and medical groups have joined forces with a large coalition of cities, counties and air districts, faith, consumer, environmental, community, academic groups and others

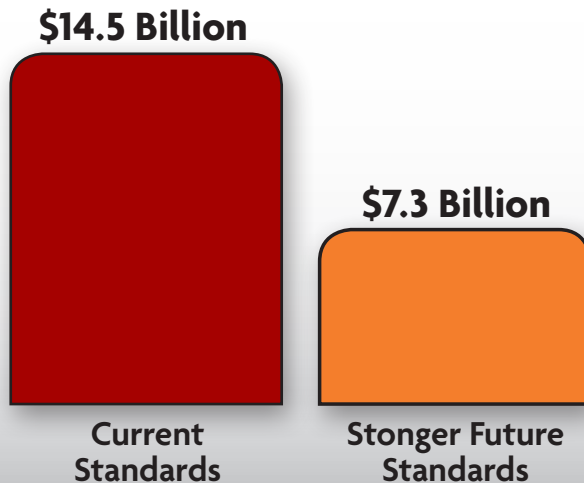
under the California Clean Cars Campaign found online at www.calcleancars.org. The American Lung Association in California is a leading voice in this coalition to urge California to take advantage of the opportunity to achieve a cleaner future.

“These clean car rules represent a critical opportunity to create a clean transportation future that breaks our addiction to harmful petroleum fuels” notes Ralph DiLibero MD, a former president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. Fossil fuels currently comprise 96 percent of California's transportation energy needs. By taking the necessary steps to move California off oil, the next generation of vehicles can—and must—significantly cut the serious consequences of vehicle pollution.

To support the health case for stronger standards, the American Lung Association in California released a new study, *The Road to Clean Air*, in May that provides compelling evidence about the health benefits of a cleaner fleet of vehicles in California. The study found that vehicles meeting today's standards will still generate serious health-harming pollution due to their ongoing consumption of petroleum fuels: each year, the average gasoline vehicle will cause approximately \$470 in health, environmental and other social harm. That translates to more than \$14 billion across a full fleet each year.

Road to Clean Air

Comparison of Annual Health and Societal Costs of Current and Future CA Vehicle Standards



The new study found that, with wider adoption of hybrids and more advanced technologies like battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, California could avoid over \$7 billion annually in health and other societal costs. Reduced emissions from a cleaner fleet could help California annually avoid 400 premature deaths, 8,000 asthma attacks and lower respiratory symptoms, 390 heart attacks, 420 ER visits and hospitalizations and over 39,000 lost work and school days.

These are real health benefits that the state can't afford to leave on the table by allowing weaker standards. California needs to move forward with strong clean car standards because California's nearly 30 million motor vehicles still represent a leading source of harmful pollution.

According to Dr. David Cooke, a thoracic surgeon and Board Member of the American Lung Association in California, "Traffic emissions pose serious and long lasting threats to public health. Smog and particulates generated by our cars and trucks cause immediate and lifelong lung health impacts, while greenhouse gases emitted today will threaten our health for generations to come." While pollution affects everyone, California's children, seniors and those living with chronic illnesses face the greatest burdens from air pollution and are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

In recognition of our state's extreme air quality situation, the federal Clean Air Act provides California with the authority to establish more stringent motor vehicle standards than those in place nationally. California has for decades instituted strong vehicle standards to cut pollution and require automotive technologies that support clean air. California's standards always lead the nation; thirteen other states and Washington D.C. adopted California's greenhouse gas standards before the federal government moved forward with the national program last year. Establishing strong California standards will result in stronger, more health-protective standards across the nation.

So what stands in the way? Just as automakers fought against seatbelts, airbags and pollution-controlling catalytic converters, once again they claim that imposing stronger, more health-protective standards would be too costly and too difficult. But we know these claims are untrue, as history has shown that carmakers have met these challenges and consumers continue to demand safer, more efficient vehicles.

Nonetheless, the major automakers continue to oppose these efforts. They have succeeded in delaying and weakening California's groundbreaking Zero Emission Vehicle program. On the national level, there have been lawsuits to prevent California from adopting

stronger vehicle pollution standards. Fortunately, suits filed by the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Automobile Dealers Alliance were thrown out of federal court in late April.

Despite these attacks on cleaner cars, more and more hybrids and advanced vehicles are hitting the road in California every day. Clean cars are here; protecting our state authority to implement strong standards will boost their numbers and improve our air.

But it is not just industry lawsuits that threaten to derail cleaner air. This Spring, there were attempts in the U.S. Congress to eliminate funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to remove California's authority to create new standards, and to otherwise delay and undermine the Clean Air Act's successful history of preventing illness and deaths. One dangerous proposal would have had the US Congress legislating science by rejecting the EPA's scientific findings that greenhouse gases endanger public health. While so far thwarted, polluting industries and their lobbyists will continue to downplay the science and medical knowledge that air pollution hurts health and shortens lives. Because of this, physicians have a key role to play in the future of transportation and air quality in California.

So far, more than two dozen health and medical organizations have endorsed the California Clean Cars Campaign, including physician groups throughout the state. Southern California physicians are uniquely aware of the impacts of air quality on public health and your voice is needed now. With physician support, California can end its addiction to petroleum and get on the road to clean air.

The American Lung Association in California is urging physicians to help advocate for the strongest possible regulations as the California Air Resources Board updates the standards this fall. By signing our petition, physicians can add their voice to the growing list of doctors, nurses and other health professionals using their respected voice to make California's air easier to breathe for generations to come. The petition and related information on the *Road To Clean Air* report is available at www.lungusa.org/california.

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