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Assemblymember Ruskin, Controller Westly, Environmental Groups, Scientists and Physicians Push for State to Take Action on Climate Change

Ruskin's AB 1365 Updates State Planning Priorities to Include Kyoto-like Provision

With the threat of climate change growing worse by the day, a historic bill to tackle the issue was passed by the California Assembly's Natural Resources Committee on a bipartisan, 8 to 1 vote. Authored by Assemblymember Ira Ruskin (D-Redwood City), and sponsored by State Controller Steve Westly, the bill (AB 1365) updates the State Planning Priorities to include an additional goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 7% by 2010 and 10% by 2020 based on the 1990 greenhouse gas emission levels.

"From cities in my district to cities across the state and around the globe, we face a serious threat from climate change," said California Assemblymember Ira Ruskin, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials. "It's well past time to tackle this growing threat by adding a climate change goal to California's State Planning Priorities. The world's top scientists have told us that climate change is not only real it is already taking place. The good news is we have solutions, like this bill, that can turn the tide without harming our economy."

"You can't argue with solid scientific evidence that Global Warming is a real threat to humanity," said State Controller Westly. "As the sixth largest economy in the world, we should lead the effort to stop the damaging effects of Global Warming and join other industrialized nations in adopting Kyoto Protocol Standards."

An overwhelming consensus of the world's top climate scientists has concluded the climate change, called "global warming" by some, is well underway. Glaciers from Africa to California have been melting more rapidly, weather patterns have started to change and a recent report by the "[Stabilisation 2005](#)" conference, organized by the United Kingdom, found that "the risks [from unchecked climate change] are more serious than previously thought" and that within ten years, if no action is taken, climate may become irreversible.

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"After decades of studying climate change, a global consensus has emerged: Climate change is real, has already begun, and poses a grave threat to the United States and the world," said Dr. Peter H. Gleick, President of the Pacific Institute and a 2003 MacArthur Fellow. "The failure of the United States to act means that states must begin the process. This historic bill is a first step in that direction."

The standards-setting bill will encourage companies, government agencies and individuals to improve efficiency and curtail the pollution that causes climate change without creating onerous new regulation.

Dr. Ron Cohen, UC Berkeley Professor in the Departments of Chemistry and Earth and Planetary Science, said: "California is currently emitting 1.5% of the world's greenhouse gases, enough that a change in our own behavior will be measurable worldwide. Our state has a long tradition of scientific and technical leadership. A proactive stance on greenhouse gas reduction is likely to reinforce ongoing efforts in California's academic and commercial sectors to develop economically sensible solutions for reducing greenhouse gases. Such developments will further California's advantage in high technology producing new jobs here while leading the world to a more stable climate."

"The evidence has never been clearer: Time is running out and immediate action is imperative," Assemblymember Ruskin concluded.

Along with rising sea levels, more intense storms, and more frequent and intense droughts, climate change may severely affect California's agricultural industry, its wine-growing regions, and its ski industry. Climate change is also very likely to play havoc with the state's water supply by changing when and where we get rain, by raising temperatures, and by impacting how quickly our snow pack melts.

AB 1365 is supported by the Sierra Club, California League of Conservation Voters, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Pacific Institute.

[Questions and Answers about Climate Change Prepared by the Pacific Institute of Oakland, California, April 22, 2005](#)

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