



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 20, 2019

Calif. May Ban Gas-driven Cars Even Though Some Experts Say Electrics Pollute MORE

Some California cities may be swimming in homeless, hypodermic needles, human waste, and garbage, but Golden State officials really truly do care about the environment, they tell us. In fact, they care so much that some have proposed banning gasoline-powered cars — even though reputable experts say that electric autos pollute more.



Oh, such a proposal is still a radical idea in what may be our most radical state, and it won't become reality anytime soon, it appears. But as *USA Today* [reports](#):

Speaking at an air-quality workshop in San Diego, Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board, was expected to toss in the idea of killing off gas-powered cars based on her prepared remarks. They called for her to list ways in which the state can get tougher on pollution.

“That might mean, for example, tougher requirements for low-carbon fuels, looking at tighter health-protective regulations on California refineries, doubling down on our enforcement efforts on mobile and stationary sources — and might lead to an outright ban on internal-combustion engines,” according to the remarks obtained by Bloomberg News.

But when it came to actually delivering the remarks, the direct reference to a gas-engine ban was omitted. In closing the conference, Nichols said if the air can't be cleaned fast enough, tougher measures like “fees, taxes and bans on certain types of vehicles” might be required. She added, “These are things that most of us don't think is the right way to go.”

In fairness to the Land of Fruits and Nuts, Nichols was responding to demands placed on her state by tougher federal-government clean-air regulations (President Trump, take note), *USA Today* further informs. Moreover, the paper also states that banning the combustion engine is still a “fanciful” idea in California and cites a bill introduced in the state legislature last year that would have done just that, by 2040, but that died quickly.

The paper also mentions that even some green-vehicle proponents admit that the time for banning gas cars isn't “right” given electric vehicles' high cost, their charging issues, and other details that must be worked out. Yet a larger, more basic issue is ignored: Electric cars may be a cure worse than the disease.

In fact, this is precisely the position of former plug-in advocate and General Motors engineer Ozzie Zehner. While he once built his own hybrid car that could run on electricity or natural gas and believed that creations such as his “would help reduce both pollution and fossil-fuel dependence,” he some years ago had to issue a perhaps painful admission: “I was wrong.”

Author of the book [Green Illusions](#), Zehner elaborated on electric cars' problems in a 2013 piece



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[entitled](#) “Unclean at Any Speed.”

Starting out simply, Zehner explained that while it’s “relatively easy to calculate the amount of energy required to charge a vehicle’s battery,” even the cleaner options for generating electricity (as opposed to oil or coal) have effects that are both real and hard to assess.

For example, “Natural gas requires burning, it produces CO₂, and it often demands environmentally problematic methods to release it from the ground,” he wrote. “Nuclear power yields hard-to-store wastes as well as proliferation and fallout risks. There’s no clear-cut way to compare those impacts. Focusing only on greenhouse gases, however important, misses much of the picture.”

Moreover, electric cars cannot currently be charged on a wide scale with renewable resources such as solar. Even if they could, however, solar “cells contain heavy metals, and their manufacturing releases greenhouse gases such as sulfur hexafluoride, which has 23,000 times as much global warming potential as CO₂, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,” Zehner also told us.

“What’s more, fossil fuels are burned in the extraction of the raw materials needed to make solar cells and wind turbines — and for their fabrication, assembly, and maintenance,” he continued. “The same is true for the redundant backup power plants they require. And even more fossil fuel is burned when all this equipment is decommissioned.”

Additionally, the extraction and processing of materials found in batteries — such as lithium, copper, and nickel — “demand energy and can release toxic wastes,” Zehner further informed. There are many more downsides as well. To learn more please read Zehner’s piece or my 2013 article [here](#).

Note, too, that other studies, such as in [Norway](#); by the [National Academies](#) of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; by the [University of Tennessee](#); and by [University of Edinburgh](#), have also found that electric vehicles pollute more than their gas counterparts.

The kicker here is that the global-warming agenda and the demonization of beneficial gas CO₂ — which drive the electric-car obsession — are without foundation, as I explain [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Of course, driving electric cars is emotionally pleasing to many citizens because of the “out of sight, out of mind” phenomenon. When using a combustion-engine vehicle, we can often see and smell fumes emitted into the air; with electric cars, however, the *pollution is hidden*. It’s great for value signaling and self-delusion.

As for government officials, they derive benefits anytime they claim to be white-knight problem-solvers. Not only can they gain voters, but their value-signaling can be used to further fleece the people, since new taxes are often their “solution” to various “crises.”

A real crisis, however, is the statist arrogance leading many to fancy themselves qualified to micromanage a civilization. Apropos to this, economist Thomas Sowell once pointed out that it “takes considerable knowledge just to realize the extent of your own ignorance,” and Nobel laureate Friedrich August von Hayek stated that the “curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design,” as Professor Walter E. Williams [related](#) in 2017.

As an example, Williams points out that the “average well-stocked supermarket carries 60,000 to 65,000 different items.” Could a government bureaucrat, inevitably ignorant of the business, successfully micromanage a supermarket’s inventory the way an experienced manager on the ground



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could? Can government in general successfully micromanage that and countless thousands of other American businesses? Such arrogance is why the Soviet Union collapsed.

Of course, politicians inevitably will have to legislate in a wide range of areas. This is why, ideally, a statesman should be Renaissance man, meaning, a jack of all trades and master of some. It also helps if leaders possess wisdom, which, as ancient Chinese sage Confucius stated, is “when you know something, knowing that you know it; and when you do not know something, knowing that you do not know it.”

Our politicians don’t know much about electric cars because they don’t know much — their specialty being how to gain and maintain power. That wouldn’t stop them from legislating in that area, though. After all, when has ignorance ever stopped them?

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