

# **Protect AB 32: Clean Air Saves Lives and Money**

Air pollution has created a public health crisis in California. California's innovative clean air laws, including AB 32, are vital to cut harmful pollution from our air, reduce the incidence of asthma attacks and lung and heart illnesses that send people to hospitals and emergency rooms, and help people live full and healthy lives. AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, is helping California advance beyond dirty petroleum fuels and embrace clean energy, clean transportation and land use planning that reduces traffic pollution and promotes public health. Unfortunately, AB 32 has come under attack by those who want to defend the status quo. Now is a critical time for health and medical leaders to speak out and defend AB 32 as a critical air quality and public health law.

As health and medical leaders, we see firsthand the damages caused by air pollution and oil dependence in California. Dirty air affects us all, but our children, the elderly, low income communities, communities of color and those living with asthma and other respiratory conditions suffer the most. California asthma rates have risen over the past few decades<sup>1</sup>, with childhood rates in some Central Valley counties as high as 20-30 percent<sup>2</sup>. Air pollution is linked to slowed lung development in children, and can limit breathing capacity for a lifetime. Each year in California, more than 9,000 people die due to the effects of unhealthy air statewide, or about 14 deaths per day in the Southern California region<sup>3</sup>. Thousands more suffer from asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes and reproductive harm, while millions lose time at work or school. The price tag of dirty air adds up to \$28 billion annually in health and economic costs each year in Los Angeles and the San Joaquin Valley alone<sup>4</sup>. Dependence on dirty fuels in passenger cars alone adds up to billions in annual costs<sup>5</sup>. Illnesses linked to dirty air put pressure on family budgets and contribute to overburdened hospitals and emergency rooms.

Air quality and public health is also worsened by changing climate conditions that contribute to heat waves, forest fires and other emergency situations. Extreme heat elevates risks for hospitalization for lung illness, stroke, diabetes, kidney failure, dehydration and pneumonia in vulnerable populations.

Fortunately, California's clean air law, AB 32 and recently adopted clean energy, and clean vehicle and fuel standards will further spur progress toward cleaner air, bring tremendous public health benefits and reduce strain and costs to our healthcare system. California must stay the course on these critical public health laws, and resist pressure from those that would benefit financially from weakening them, so that we can meet our clean air and climate goals, and ultimately help generations of Californians to breathe easier.

Our health and medical organizations call on California elected leaders to uphold California's clean air laws by:

1. Promoting AB 32 and California's leadership in setting strong clean air standards to transition California to a clean energy economy and protect public health.

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Public Health. California Breathing. [Strategic Plan for Asthma in California 2008-2012](#).

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Public Health, California Breathing. [Lifetime Asthma Prevalence, Children, 2009](#).

<sup>3</sup> California Air Resources Board. [Estimate of Premature Deaths Associated with Fine Particulate Matter in California](#), 2010

<sup>4</sup> California State University Fullerton. [The Benefits of Meeting Federal Clean Air Standards in the South Coast and San Joaquin Valley Air Basins](#). 2008.

<sup>5</sup> American Lung Association in California. [The Road to Clean Air](#). 2011.

2. Supporting California's innovative and life-saving programs to implement AB 32 including: Advanced Clean Cars, Low Carbon Fuel Standard, SB 375 Sustainable Communities planning efforts and other key clean air programs.
3. Fighting efforts to weaken, delay or otherwise undermine California's clean air and clean energy standards.

California's clean air laws have set us on path for a healthier future and we support them because all Californians deserve to breathe clean, healthy air.

**Defend Our Children's Clean Air Future**

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