

State Senate OKs climate change bill, seeks to ban new offshore drilling

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JUNE 3, 2015, 9:25 PM | REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO

State senators passed legislation Wednesday intended to help California tackle climate change by setting new targets for generating renewable energy, reducing gasoline use and increasing energy efficiency in buildings.

The lawmakers also approved a measure that would ban new offshore oil drilling from an area in the Santa Barbara Channel known as Tranquillon Ridge, two weeks after an oil spill at nearby Refugio State Beach.

The climate change bill, which now goes to the Assembly with other bills passed by the Senate, advances goals outlined by Gov. Jerry Brown earlier this year.

If passed by the Assembly and signed into law, the bill would require California to meet several objectives by 2030: generating 50% of its electricity from renewable sources, doubling energy efficiency in older buildings and cutting in half the amount of gasoline used on state roads.

"These standards are reasonable, achievable and consistent," said Senate leader Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles), author of the proposal.

Republicans opposed the measure, which they said would raise fuel costs and stifle businesses with new regulations. And they questioned whether the targets are achievable.

"We have a very lofty and noble goal," said Senate Republican leader Bob Huff (R-San Dimas). "But other than feeling good about it, what does it accomplish?"

De León said the plan would lead to cleaner air in the Central Valley, which has some of the state's worst pollution. He and other Democrats said the measure, SB 350, would lead to new investment in cleaner technologies.

"This bill is not a job killer," said Sen. Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). "It is a major job creator."

Senators passed several other proposals related to climate change Wednesday.

One, SB 32 by Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills), would put into law executive orders issued by Brown and his predecessor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. It would require the state to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and then to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.

The other bill, SB 185 by de León, would require the state's pension funds, the two largest public funds in the country, to divest from coal.

The Assembly approved and sent to the Senate several climate-related measures, including AB 1288 by Speaker Toni Atkins (D-San Diego). It would remove the expiration date for the state's cap-and-trade program, in which permits to pollute are traded and fees are levied.

On the proposal to ban oil drilling, Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) said the Tranquillon Ridge sector is designated as a Marine Protected Area, so the state should not risk oil spills by allowing drilling there.

The region has the only waters along California's coast that could be used for new oil production.

"As long as you drill, there will be spills," Jackson said, adding that the proposal would not affect production of the 30 or so existing oil rigs off the California coast. "It just says we are done ... developing new oil."

The legislation was introduced before the May 19 leak from an oil pipeline that released 101,000 gallons of crude at Refugio State Beach, including 21,000 gallons that flowed into the Pacific Ocean.

But co-authors Jackson and Sen. Mike McGuire (D-San Rafael) cited the spill Wednesday as evidence of the vulnerability of oil operations in environmentally sensitive regions.

Sen. Jeff Stone (R-Murrieta) opposed the measure, SB 788, saying it would cost the state millions of dollars in potential revenue as well as new oil industry jobs.

"This bill, I think, sends the wrong message about oil and gas production in our state," he said. While he said green energy should be pursued, "oil and gas are still an important part of the equation" for meeting the state's energy needs.

Also on Wednesday:

- › The Senate voted to expand the list of misdemeanors that result in a 10-year ban on the possession of firearms. Dealing in firearms without a license, petty

theft involving a firearm, selling ammunition to someone younger than 21 and taking or carrying ammunition onto school grounds would be included under SB 347 by Jackson.

The Assembly passed AB 1200, a measure by Assemblyman Rich Gordon (D-San Mateo), to require disclosure of lobbying activity related to state purchasing contracts.

The Assembly advanced a proposal to require that parents be notified when blood samples taken from newborns to screen for diseases are retained by the state for research. The measure is AB 170 by Assemblyman Mike Gatto (D-Los Angeles).

A measure to collect data on police stops to help the state evaluate the occurrence of racial profiling passed the Assembly. AB 953 is by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber (D-San Diego).

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