

Senate Bill 180

Cleaner Power Plants

Senator Jackson

SUMMARY

In the Governor's joint Inaugural and State of the State address, he articulated a vision that by 2030 California would derive 50 percent of its electricity from renewable sources and reduce the excessive release of methane, black carbon, carbon dioxide, and other pollutants into the atmosphere. Senate Bill 180 will help California achieve those goals by making our power plants cleaner over time. SB 180 accomplishes this by creating new Emissions Performance Standards that limit the amount of carbon dioxide power plants may emit.

BACKGROUND

SB 1368 (Chapter 598, Statutes of 2006) required the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish an Emission Performance Standard (EPS) for power plants that operate at least 60 percent of the time, which are called baseload power plants. The EPS is a limit on how much carbon dioxide baseload plants may emit. When the EPS was created, California was in a stage of building up its baseload energy producing capabilities. Given the development and expansion of solar, wind, and other intermittent, renewable sources of energy, California's needs have shifted to building up peaking power generation. Peaker plants are power plants that can turn on and off quickly in response to demand. Typically peaker plants emit more carbon dioxide than baseload plants and, because they run far less than 60 percent of the time, are exempt from the EPS.

SOLUTION

In recognizing the changing landscape of electricity generation in California, SB 180 creates two new EPSs; one for "primary generation" and another for "secondary generation." Primary generation covers power plant that operate more than 15 percent of the time and secondary generation covers power plants that operate between 2-15 percent of the time. SB 180 directs the CPUC, through a rule making process, to establish the lowest EPSs that are technologically

feasible without putting the reliability of the electrical grid and electric service at risk. Power plants that run less than two percent of the time are exempt from the Secondary EPS so that reliability of the electrical grid and electric service isn't jeopardized in an emergency.

SB 180 further requires the CPUC to revise downward both EPSs every five years based on technological advances, with an initial cap on the Primary EPS of 80 percent lower than the current baseload EPS. This will ensure that new power plants in California are the cleanest we can build without putting reliability of the electrical grid and electric service at risk. As old plant licenses expire they will be ineligible to apply for relicensing unless they are retrofitted to be as clean as the best technology to date. This will force California to phase out its dirtiest plants, which are typically located in disadvantaged communities with high levels of pollution, and will help California transition to achieving 50 percent of electricity generation from renewable sources.

Finally, in recognition that carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) may be required to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from dirtier plants as we transition to renewable sources of electricity generation, SB 180 assigns the California Energy Commission as the California Environmental Quality Act lead agency for CCS projects involving the injection and permanent storage of captured carbon into a geologic formation.

SUPPORT

STATUS

Introduced and pending referral to policy committees.

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