

Dr. Arambula should lead way to healthy Valley air

BY VERONICA GARIBAY

This month, California missed a vital opportunity to significantly improve the quality of life for residents in some of our state's most vulnerable and underserved communities.

By not passing [Assembly Bill 378](#), which would have required new emissions standards for criteria and toxic-air pollutants at facilities covered under cap and trade, leadership made a statement that California isn't prepared to make the necessary steps and votes, to lead the nation on environmental justice.

In its current form, cap and trade is not achieving the win-win outcomes of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality. Recent research has shown that GHG emissions from some facilities have actually increased, and rather than cutting emissions directly at the source, our dirtiest polluters are using out-of-state offsets to trade away our clean air benefits.

Our cap-and-trade program cannot be a model for other nations or states, without addressing and tackling the environmental justice issues at the heart of the program.

The reality is that there is a long-standing issue with toxic emissions that are harming the health of low-income communities, including communities in the Valley. Regulations are outdated and facilities are out of compliance, and those facilities that are benefitting from the current carbon market, need to clean up their act.

Assemblymember [Dr. Joaquin Arambula's](#) failure to support AB 378 was a failure to support environmental justice in Fresno, the greater Valley, and all of the California communities that are disproportionately impacted by poor air and health quality.

According to the 2017 American Lung Association State of the Air report, the top four areas with the worst ozone pollution in the country are all in California: Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Fresno, and Visalia. The top three worst areas in the country for short-term particulate pollution are also in California: Bakersfield, Fresno and Visalia.

And a recent UCLA study funded by the California Air Resources Board found that low-income populations and racial and ethnic minorities in California were persistently exposed to greater levels of air pollutants and, in turn, suffered increases in asthma-related difficulties like asthma attacks, daily medication use, work absences and emergency room visits.

With Fresno at the top of the list for poor air quality, and the understanding of how it leads to health and respiratory issues, I was incredibly disheartened to watch Arambula vote against AB 378, which would have improved the quality of life for the residents in his own community – the San Joaquin Valley.

I'm not alone when I say that Fresnans had higher expectations for Arambula; someone who was born and raised in the Valley, who is a practicing physician, and who is an assemblymember who champions to "make the Central Valley a better place to live, work and raise a family." So I ask, who and what exactly is our representative championing?

We remain committed to seeing effective and equitable climate policies, and supporting the leaders who rise up to champion environmental justice for all Californians. At this very moment, the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown are negotiating the very policies that will help the state reach our 2030 climate goals and adapt to impacts of climate change while protecting our state's most vulnerable communities.

We still have an opportunity to lead on environmental justice and do right by the communities, like Fresno, that are disproportionately impacted by poor and discriminatory local and state policy and investment decisions.

Assemblymember Arambula, will you join us?

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