

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3496

To address the health and economic development impacts of nonattainment of federally mandated air quality standards in the San Joaquin Valley, California, by designating air quality empowerment zones.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

Mrs. BOXER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To address the health and economic development impacts of nonattainment of federally mandated air quality standards in the San Joaquin Valley, California, by designating air quality empowerment zones.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Air and Health Quality
5 Empowerment Zone Designation Act of 2008”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

7 The purpose of this Act is to establish criteria
8 through the use of which specific geographical areas—

1 (1) shall be designated as air and health quality
2 empowerment zones; and

3 (2) may apply for grants authorized for the
4 purpose of replacing or retrofitting polluting vehicles
5 or engines (or both vehicles and engines) in order to
6 improve the health of the population living in the
7 zones.

8 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

9 Congress finds that—

10 (1) the San Joaquin Valley faces serious air
11 quality challenges that impact the development,
12 health, and economy of the Valley;

13 (2) the Valley emits approximately 624 tons of
14 nitrogen oxides per day, and attainment of the fed-
15 erally mandated 8-hour ozone standard under the
16 Clean Air Act requires emissions of not more than
17 160 tons of oxides of nitrogen per day;

18 (3) the Valley does not attain the federally
19 mandated standard for PM_{2.5};

20 (4) the children of the Valley miss 188,000
21 school days per year, which translates to 1 in 4 of
22 those children experiencing a day of absence each
23 year due to elevated ozone levels;

24 (5) approximately 460 residents of the Valley
25 die earlier than they otherwise would due to elevated

1 ozone levels, and Valley residents experience 23,300
2 asthma attacks per year, a rate that equals 3 times
3 the State average and 5 times the national average;

4 (6) 1 in 5 children residing in the Valley have
5 been diagnosed with asthma;

6 (7) nonattainment of Federal air quality stand-
7 ards costs the Valley \$3,200,000,000 annually;

8 (8) the Valley experiences chronic double-digit
9 unemployment rates; and

10 (9) the Federal Government must partner with
11 the Valley and the State to address air quality,
12 health, and economic development for the residents
13 of the Valley through the designation of the Valley
14 as air quality empowerment zone that is eligible for
15 Federal grants and technical assistance.

16 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

17 In this Act:

18 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
19 trator” means the Administrator of the Environ-
20 mental Protection Agency.

21 (2) AGENCY.—The term “Agency” means the
22 Environmental Protection Agency.

23 (3) CLEAN AIR ACT.—The term “Clean Air
24 Act” means the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et
25 seq.).

1 (4) PM_{2.5}.—The term “PM_{2.5}” means particu-
 2 late matter with a diameter that does not exceed 2.5
 3 micrometers.

4 (5) STRATEGIC PLAN.—The term “strategic
 5 plan” means, with respect to an area, the plan con-
 6 tained in the application for designation of the area
 7 under section 5.

8 (6) VALLEY.—The term “Valley” means the
 9 San Joaquin Valley, California.

10 **SEC. 5. AIR QUALITY EMPOWERMENT ZONE DESIGNATION**
 11 **PROCEDURES.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—From among the areas nominated
 13 for designation under this section, the Administrator may
 14 designate 1 or more areas as air and health quality em-
 15 powerment zones.

16 (b) PERIOD FOR WHICH DESIGNATION IS IN EF-
 17 FECTION.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—Any designation under this
 19 section shall remain in effect during the period be-
 20 ginning on the date of the designation and ending
 21 on the earlier of—

22 (A) the last day of the tenth calendar year
 23 beginning on the date of the designation; or

24 (B) the date on which the Administrator
 25 revokes the designation.

1 (2) REVOCATION OF DESIGNATION.—The Ad-
2 ministrators may revoke the designation under this
3 section of an area if the Administrator determines
4 that the local air pollution control district in which
5 the designated area is located—

6 (A) has been designated as being in attain-
7 ment with the national ambient air quality
8 standard for PM_{2.5} and ozone promulgated
9 under the Clean Air Act; or

10 (B) is not complying substantially with, or
11 fails to make progress in achieving the goals of,
12 the strategic plan.

13 (c) LIMITATIONS ON DESIGNATIONS.—No area may
14 be designated under subsection (a) unless—

15 (1) the area is nominated for designation by the
16 air pollution control district with jurisdiction over
17 the area;

18 (2) the air pollution control district provides
19 written assurances satisfactory to the Administrator
20 that the strategic plan will be implemented; and

21 (3) the Administrator determines that any in-
22 formation provided is reasonably accurate.

23 (d) APPLICATION.—No area may be designated under
24 subsection (a) unless the application for the designation—

1 (1) demonstrates that the nominated area satis-
2 fies the eligibility criteria described in section 6; and

3 (2) includes a strategic plan for accomplishing
4 the purposes of this Act that—

5 (A) describes—

6 (i) the process by which the nomi-
7 nated area is a full partner in the process
8 of developing and implementing the plan;
9 and

10 (ii) the extent to which local institu-
11 tions and organizations have contributed to
12 the planning process;

13 (B) identifies—

14 (i) the amount of State, local, and pri-
15 vate resources that will be available for the
16 nominated area; and

17 (ii) the private/public partnerships to
18 be used (which may include participation
19 by, and cooperation with, institutions of
20 higher education, medical centers, and
21 other private and public entities);

22 (C) identifies the funding requested under
23 any Federal program in support of the purposes
24 of this Act;

1 (D) identifies baselines, methods, and
 2 benchmarks for measuring the success of car-
 3 rying out the strategic plan; and

4 (E) includes such other information as
 5 may be required by the Administrator.

6 **SEC. 6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—A nominated area shall be eligible
 8 for designation under section 5(a) only if the area meets
 9 all of the following criteria:

10 (1) NONATTAINMENT.—The nominated area
 11 has been designated as being—

12 (A) in extreme nonattainment of the 8-
 13 hour ozone national ambient air quality stand-
 14 ard promulgated by the Administrator under
 15 the Clean Air Act; and

16 (B) in nonattainment of national ambient
 17 air quality standard for PM_{2.5} promulgated by
 18 the Administrator under that Act.

19 (2) AGRICULTURAL SOURCES.—The nominated
 20 area has—

21 (A) emissions of oxides of nitrogen from
 22 farm equipment of at least 30 tons per day in
 23 calendar year 2010; or

1 (B) emissions of volatile organic com-
 2 pounds from farming operations of at least 40
 3 tons per day in calendar year 2010.

4 (3) AIR-RELATED HEALTH EFFECTS.—As of
 5 the date of nomination, the nominated area—

6 (A) meets or exceeds the national average
 7 per capita incidence of asthma; and

8 (B) meets or exceeds the national average
 9 of school days missed due to the health impact
 10 of elevated ozone levels.

11 (4) ECONOMIC IMPACT.—As of the date of nom-
 12 ination, the nominated area experiences unemploy-
 13 ment rates higher than the national average.

14 (5) STATE MATCHING FUNDS.—The nominated
 15 area is located within a State and local area that
 16 will match at least ½ of the funds provided by the
 17 Federal Government under this Act.

18 **SEC. 7. ELIGIBLE GRANT APPLICANTS.**

19 Any air pollution control district or other local gov-
 20 ernmental entity authorized to regulate air quality in a
 21 State under the Clean Air Act may apply for a grant
 22 under this Act.

23 **SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF AIR AND HEALTH EMPOWER-**
 24 **MENT GRANTS.**

25 (a) ELIGIBILITY.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each area designated as an
2 air and health quality empowerment zone under sec-
3 tion 5(a) shall be eligible to receive 1 or more grants
4 under this section.

5 (2) AMOUNT OF GRANTS.—The amount of each
6 grant awarded to a designated air and health quality
7 empowerment zone shall be determined by the Ad-
8 ministrator based upon a review of—

9 (A) the information contained in the appli-
10 cations required by section 5(d); and

11 (B) the needs set forth in the applications
12 by those designated as beneficiaries.

13 (3) TIMING OF GRANTS.—With respect to each
14 designated air and health quality empowerment
15 zone, the Administrator shall make—

16 (A) a grant under this section to each such
17 zone on the date of designation of the zone
18 under section 5(a); and

19 (B) the grant under this section to each
20 such zone available on the first day of the first
21 fiscal year that begins after the date of designa-
22 tion of the zone.

23 (4) OVERSIGHT OF GRANTS.—The air pollution
24 control district or other local government entity au-
25 thorized to regulate air quality in an area designated

1 as an air and health safety empowerment zone under
2 section 5(a) shall oversee the use of any grant funds
3 provided to the zone under this section.

4 (b) USE OF GRANTS.—Each air and health safety
5 empowerment zone that receives a grant under this section
6 shall use the grant solely—

7 (1) to carry out activities that achieve the pur-
8 poses described in section 2;

9 (2) in accordance with the strategic plan for the
10 zone; and

11 (3) for activities that benefit the residents of
12 the zone for which the grant is made through im-
13 proved air quality and health.

14 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
15 authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator to pro-
16 vide grants under this section \$20,000,000 for each of fis-
17 cal years 2009 through 2013.

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