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Will Arnold Tackle Toxic E-Waste?



Written by Marsha Johnston

Wednesday, 30 April 2008



Before he was elected Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger told his cousin-in-law and environmental champion Robert F. Kennedy Jr. that [he was determined to be the best environmental governor in California history](#). Much to the horror of elements of the Republican Party, Gov. Schwarzenegger has proven pretty true to his word. Among other naughty regulatory moves, he has [banned ocean seabed trawling](#), endorsed a massive [solar energy incentive program](#) and [sued the EPA](#) for refusing to allow California to set its own greenhouse gas emissions standard.

When [Assembly Bill 218](#) emerges from the California legislature, he will have another chance to prove himself as the Great Green Governor and set a *de facto* national standard in the process.

Tracking provisions of a similar ban in Europe, Assembly Member Lori Saldaña's (D-76) bill would require manufacturers to phase out the use of hazardous materials in all consumer electronics sold in California by January 1, 2010. It exempts spare parts manufactured before 2010—lack of said exemption drew the Governor's veto last fall—and gives time to find durable alternatives for things like lead solder, and provides manufacturers a means to prove no viable alternative exists to using toxic stuff.

Because the Golden State accounts for one-eighth of the global electronics market and because the bill follows EU policy, it would likely become the *de facto* U.S. standard, says Californians Against Waste executive director Mark Murray. Saldaña's spokesman says the bill currently has no opposition from industry and notes that previous iterations had support from heavyweights Panasonic and Sony.

While Saldaña says they can never be certain what will prompt a Schwarzenegger veto, Murray believes that as long as AB 218 has industry support there is probably an 80 percent chance the Governor will sign it into law. "This is a Big Idea Governor, so the idea that California would be the first would be a good selling point for him, to allow him to be the biggest, baddest, greenest governor in the nation. The question is how sexy we can make it for him."

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