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Environmental groups slam Fresno lawmaker

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- Say his legislation will hurt his constituents
- The oil industry is trying to slither out

Henry Perea, a Fresno Democrat, is the target of scathing criticism from environmental groups following his introduction of legislation that would delay putting fuels under the cap-and-trade program until January 2018.

Mr. Perea, who received \$41,900 from the oil and gas industry from January 2011 through December 2012, according to nonpartisan political watchdog MapLight.org, says his legislation would prevent a possible increase in gasoline prices in January.

The cap-and-trade system should not be used to raise billions of dollars in new state funds at the expense of consumers who are struggling to get back on their feet after the recession, says Mr. Perea. In some areas of the state, like the Central Valley, constituents need to drive long distances and they will be disproportionately impacted by rising gas prices.

But environmental groups dont believe him.

"The oil industry is trying to slither out from under a fair regulation that will give the public cleaner air. Few areas of the state need or deserve clean air as much as the Fresno area, says Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California. Yet, the respected Assembly member from Fresno is enabling this bad behavior. Its a very disappointing situation.

We are appalled with this desperate attempt by the petroleum industry and their allies in Sacramento to undo years of public participation and voter review that affirms the mandate of AB 32, says a joint statement from Miya Yoshitani, executive director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Katelyn Roedner Sutter, environmental justice program director for the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton and Martha Dina Arguello, executive director for Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA.

Its not surprising that oil companies would take such a hardline stance to protect their profits against the expressed will of the voters, they say. But it is disappointing Mr. Perea and the co-authors of his bill would be complicit in an effort that would have some of its worst economic and health impacts on their own constituents.

Still, Mr. Perea has his supporters.

California's small businesses and consumers face significant economic harm from fuel price increases coming January 1, but state officials have done nothing to inform them this is coming, says John Kabateck, National Federation of Independent Business/California executive director.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2015, greenhouse gas emissions from transportation fuels are going to be subject to the California Air Resources Board cap-and-trade program, which Mr. Perea says may cause an increase in fuel prices.