

Green benefactor Tom Steyer gives high marks to Brown's climate push

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LOCAL Political



Gov. Jerry Brown, center, Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León, left, and billionaire green activist Tom Steyer visit John Marshall High School, the first in the L.A. school district to receive Proposition 39 funding for energy efficiency projects. (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

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Billionaire activist Tom Steyer says new carbon emissions goals could make Brown a 'global leader' on climate

Climate change crusader Tom Steyer watched Gov. Jerry Brown's swearing-in Monday morning from the gallery of the Assembly chamber -- and he liked what he saw.

[Jerry Brown seeks new green regulations in historic fourth term](#)

Brown dedicated a significant portion of his inaugural address to environmental policy, particularly setting new goals to reduce the state's carbon emissions. That earned an enthusiastic endorsement from Steyer, a hedge-fund billionaire who has spent millions, [mostly unsuccessfully](#), to propel climate change to the top of the national political agenda.

The governor "perceives, correctly, that there's an opportunity for him to be a global leader on this, and I think he basically used that speech -- not exclusively but at some level -- to stake out that territory and say California is going to continue to lead and I'm going to make sure that happens while I'm here," Steyer said in an interview Monday

afternoon.

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Brown laid out [three goals for curbing carbon pollution](#) in the state in the next 15 years: deriving one half of the state's electricity from renewable sources, up from one-third; cutting petroleum use in cars and trucks by up to 50%; and doubling the efficiency of existing buildings and making heating fuels cleaner.

Steyer said all of the proposals were "exemplary" but that he was most surprised about his call to reduce petroleum use in vehicles.

"I never really heard him talk about vehicles in that way before," Steyer said.

The Democratic mega-donor has become an increasingly visible presence among California's top Democrats, joining the governor and Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) at an October event touting energy-efficiency retrofits in schools and hosting a climate forum in Oakland last month, attended by Brown and top lawmakers.

The proposals will probably meet tough resistance from the oil and gas industries, which are already combating regulations on the books. But Steyer, who said he'll offer "anything we can do" to lend support, said he believes Brown has the political capital to get the new goals through.

"Anybody who doubts Jerry Brown's political acumen, skill and effectiveness is crazy. He is a shockingly effective governor," he said.

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