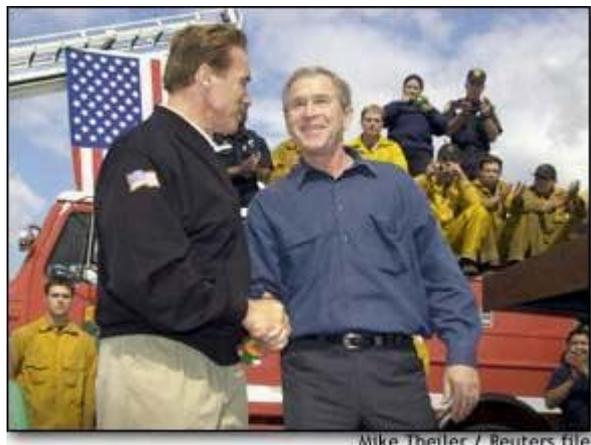




Environment

Will Gov. Schwarzenegger be green?

California's new GOP leader could clash with president



President Bush and California Gov.-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger shake hands during the president's Nov. 4 visit to Southern California to inspect wildfire destruction.

Mike Theiler / Reuters file

By Miguel Llanos

MSNBC

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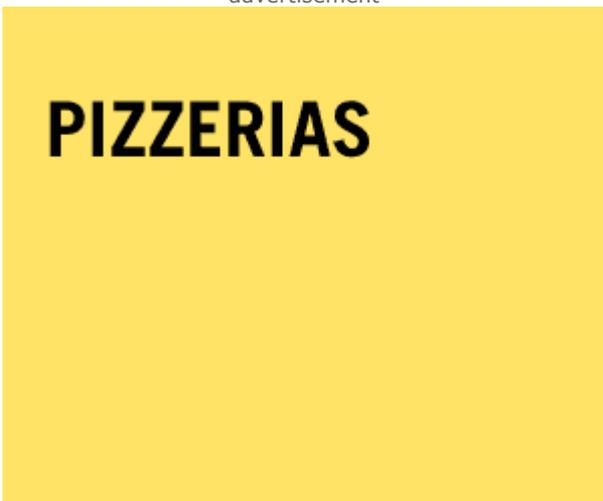
Nov. 13 - He won as a Republican, but California Gov.-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger offered an environmental plan that Al Gore would love — promising hydrogen filling stations along highways, solar power in new homes and a 50 percent cut in smog in just a few years. Parts of Schwarzenegger's platform could clash with another Republican — President Bush — especially when it comes to offshore oil drilling, air pollution and global warming.

Any clash has the potential to create waves nationwide in large part because of California's mammoth economy and its smog problem — the latter allows California's Environmental Protection Agency to set tougher air quality standards than those set by the U.S. EPA. And those state standards can end up influencing industry, particularly how cars are made.

As a result, environmentalists and conservatives have been looking for post-election signs from Schwarzenegger, who takes office on Monday.

Schwarzenegger delivered a strong sign Wednesday, nominating Terry Tamminen, a Los Angeles-area environmentalist, to head the California EPA. Tamminen, 51, helped draft Schwarzenegger's environmental platform, including the promise to encourage a future

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of fuel cell vehicles by building hydrogen stations every 20 miles on major highways.



By Miguel Llanos

Reporter

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Director of the groups Environment Now and Energy Independence Now, Tamminen met Schwarzenegger through Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — another environmentalist and cousin of Schwarzenegger's wife, Maria Shriver.

Tamminen told MSNBC.com during the campaign that he believed Schwarzenegger was truly committed to cleaner air and water, having seen through his volunteer work with children how pollution impacts the young.

Republicans apart

The issues that could set Schwarzenegger apart from President Bush include these:

Environment and jobs. Early on in his term, the president made clear that economic priorities, and particularly jobs, would trump any environmental concerns. "We will not do anything that harms our economy," he said in March 2001.

Schwarzenegger has taken a different approach, saying "we do not have to choose between protecting our environment and protecting jobs."

The summary to his environmental platform spells that notion out further: "California's economic future depends significantly on the quality of our environment. We face serious environmental challenges, which have profound impact on public health and the economy. 'Jobs vs. the environment' is a false choice. Overwhelming evidence demonstrates that clean air and water result in a more productive workforce, and a healthier economy, which will contribute to a balanced state budget."

Offshore drilling. The president wants increased domestic drilling as a way to offset oil and natural gas imports. California has offshore wells now, but a 1990 moratorium has kept out any new ones.

Schwarzenegger, in his environmental platform, has vowed to fight "for a permanent ban on all oil drilling in coastal waters." And he chose the site of California's worst oil spill, the coast off Santa Barbara, as the spot to announce that platform last September.

Industrial air pollution. The Bush administration recently revised a Clean Air Act provision so that coal-burning industries get greater flexibility on air pollution rules.

Environmentalists and some states have criticized the rule as allowing those industries to pollute more. Schwarzenegger, for his part, vows in his platform to "protect California's air quality standards for industrial facilities" by directing state officials to "examine the impact of the federal decision to exempt new sources of industrial air pollution."

Global warming. Arguing the science is still inconclusive and that action now would cost jobs, the president has resisted enacting steps to require that industry reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gases that many scientists fear are warming Earth.

Schwarzenegger, on the other hand, has embraced a recent California law that requires carmakers to reduce CO2 emissions on new cars and trucks.

"California's landmark legislation to cut greenhouse gases is now law, and I will work to implement it and to win the expected challenges in court along the way," he said during the campaign.

Carmakers will be challenging the law — the only one like it in the nation — partly on the basis that the U.S. EPA recently refused to list CO2 as a pollutant under the Clean Air Act. California and nine other states are suing to overturn that decision.

Renewable energy. The president has mentioned a role for solar and wind power, but offered few specifics.

Schwarzenegger has risked angering a Republican constituency — developers and builders — by saying he'd push for legislation requiring that, starting in 2005, half of all new homes in California have solar power. Builders complain that will raise the cost of homes by \$25,000.

Views from sidelines

Both environmentalists and conservatives are watching and hoping that the Schwarzenegger administration will steer their respective way.

The Sierra Club's California chapter is ready to take Schwarzenegger at face value, calling his environmental platform "ambitious and forward-looking."

"Environmentalists have been wary of embracing Schwarzenegger because of his lack of a record and his ties to politicians who have opposed our efforts," Sierra Club lobbyist Bill Magavern wrote in a post-election analysis to members. "But now the campaign is over and it is time for us to try to work with the new governor and to implement his vision."

Conservatives, for their part, want to see more specifics.

Rob Rivett, an attorney with the conservative Pacific Legal Foundation, acknowledged the Schwarzenegger environmental platform sounds liberal, but added that other campaign signals suggest a balanced administration is in the making.

"The devil's always in the details," he said. "We're keeping our fingers crossed that it's going to be reasonable."

Eye on governor's circle

Both camps are also watching Schwarzenegger's appointments. One of his first drew the ire of conservatives: Ronnie Reiss, a Democrat and

entertainment industry lawyer who helped start an environmental group, was named "senior adviser" to Schwarzenegger.

As for Tamminen, the reported California EPA nominee, Rivett said too little is known about him to form an opinion.

The Sierra Club's Magavern sure has one, and it's very favorable.

"We think he would be an excellent secretary at CalEPA," said Magavern. "He's knowledgeable and clearly has the ear of the governor-elect."

Another question mark is who'll head the California Resources Agency, which handles land and water issues.

Under outgoing Gov. Gray Davis, the agency was led by another Environment Now graduate, Mary Nichols. But many observers feel Schwarzenegger will turn to a more business friendly nominee in order to balance a Tamminen nomination.

Magavern, for one, expects "an eclectic group and a real diversity of viewpoints" in the Schwarzenegger administration.

Schwarzenegger proved that Wednesday, announcing not only Tamminen's nomination but that of two Republicans to serve under Tamminen.

James Branham, nominated as EPA undersecretary, was previously a lobbyist for the Pacific Lumber, a logging company vilified by environmentalists.

Maureen Gorsen, nominated as a deputy secretary, previously served as general counsel for the Resources Agency under Gov. Pete Wilson.

Balancing act

The biggest spotlight, of course, will be on Schwarzenegger himself. Can he be green while the state government bleeds red and businesses complain that taxes and regulations are driving them from California? Can he afford to challenge the Bush administration on environmental issues when he also needs federal help on issues from natural disasters to energy?

"We would like to see Schwarzenegger stand up to the Bush administration," Magavern said, but realistically "I think we'll see both policy and politics. Schwarzenegger has to walk a line."

One of Schwarzenegger's catchiest campaign promises was to convert one of his Hummer SUVs to run on pollution-free hydrogen.

Tai Robinson, a mechanic who is among the bidders for the project, said a decision has been delayed but that he hopes Schwarzenegger "sticks to his word."

"I've still got my fingers crossed to see where things go," he said. "It's definitely going to be a telling tale about his environmental priorities."

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