

Resignation Letter to Governor Wilson

March 7, 1997

Honorable Pete Wilson
Governor
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Wilson:

It has been a great privilege to serve you and the people of California during the past six years. As I would like to turn to new endeavors, I am submitting my resignation effective June 1, 1997. Such a decision is unavoidably difficult, though it is made easier by the fact that your administration's environmental policies are on a strong course, implemented by an experienced management team.

It has been a particular honor to serve as the first secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA). You first presented your vision of such an agency in a speech to Heal the Bay in Santa Monica in January 1990. Having taken your idea to the electorate, you then undertook the daunting task of achieving legislative agreement in 1991. Given the long-time controversy surrounding environmental matters, there is no doubt that your strong, direct, personal effort was the indispensable element in creating Cal/EPA and then building the organization.

History will observe that despite the immense pressures unleashed by the economic contraction of the early 1990's, you made certain that California continued to lead the nation in environmental protection. Your regulatory approach--combining high standards with simplified, less costly legal process--has led to significant innovation. More than 2600 process regulations were eliminated or updated following wide public consultation. The height of permitting hurdles has been linked to the risk presented, rather than the traditional "one-size-fits-all." Permit Assistance Centers make it easier for small businesses and individuals to comprehend and comply with legal requirements. From action-oriented industry-specific task forces, to cost-benefit analysis, electronic data reporting, Internet communication, statewide customer assistance forms, and a bill of rights for permit applicants, your regulatory reform agenda is making a difference.

Your simultaneous emphasis on environmental technology development has indelibly linked environmental improvement and economic progress. It is also changing environmental law. The success of the innovative public-private California Environmental Technology Partnership was underscored by the receipt of the Harvard University-Ford Foundation \$100,000 "innovation" award to our landmark technology certification program. That program is being replicated through reciprocity agreements with other leading states, and other countries including Canada. Our technology-based regulatory strategy is strengthening the position of our environmental industry--employing nearly 200,000 Californians, producing annual revenues approaching \$20

billion--at the moment when the newest, most vibrant economies of the world are seeking environmental solutions. Your recent mission to Asia provided ample evidence of this important trend.

You have not only linked economic issues to environmental matters; you have also made certain that environmental considerations are an integral part of economic policies. Your leadership on the precedent-setting utility restructuring stands as an historic example.

As we have moved in new directions, we have also strengthened and improved the indispensable traditional tool: law enforcement. You sent a clear signal in appointing me from my previous position as chief law enforcement officer of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. You reinforced that direction by your selection of experienced career prosecutors to head our enforcement efforts here. Your accomplishments in encouraging fair, certain and predictable enforcement have ranged from the coordination of enforcement and compliance activities between all of Cal/EPA's boards and departments, to the issuance of a ground breaking policy aimed at encouraging voluntary corporate environmental self-auditing. In addition, Cal/EPA has worked in partnership with prosecutors, law enforcement and regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over environmental matters to create a statewide network of county and multi-county enforcement task forces that is being studied by other states.

Each of the Cal/EPA programs has performed with distinction. After your success in confronting meddlesome, distant bureaucracies intent on imposing a federal smog reduction plan for California, the Air Resources Board prepared the most comprehensive state reduction plan in the nation--which earned U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approval. The cleaner burning gasoline introduced in 1996 cut emissions by 15%, leading to measurable improvement in air quality. High-performance electric vehicles are available to California consumers. The world watches and prepares to join in continued advancements in zero-emission, natural gas, hydrogen and other technologies--as the number of motor vehicles in the world is anticipated to double in the period between 1990 and 2010. Most important, air quality has continued to improve in California in this decade--despite continued increases in population--with particular progress in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego.

Your longtime work in water policy made a quantum leap forward with the overwhelming voter approval of Proposition 204 in November 1996. In great part due to your steadfast leadership, the state and national governments agencies are achieving a consensus with the myriad environmental and economic interests for the restoration of the Bay Delta ecosystem. There is every indication that these efforts will culminate in a plan that can be approved by the State Water Board, consistent with its statutory responsibilities. Similarly, your longtime commitment to Mono Lake bore fruit with the 1994 all-side agreement to end the courtroom battles and begin full restoration. Californians can take pride as the water level has risen from 6375 feet in 1994, to 6381.1 this month, on the way to 6392. From the first days of Cal/EPA, when my office provided primary staff support for your indispensable efforts in behalf of federal designation of the historic Monterey Bay Sanctuary, to the successful application of Morro Bay for the National Estuary program, to the adoption of tough storm water rules for Los Angeles, to the cleanup

component of the Bolsa Chica wetlands restoration, to the ongoing dialogue on the future of the Russian River, our water programs are making a measurable difference.

The Department of Toxic Substance Control has been a force for reform of state and national hazardous waste laws. S.B. 923, sponsored by Senator Calderon in cooperation with the Wilson Administration, stands as a national model for a non-litigation, land-use based approach to waste remediation. Driven by an unwelcome but unavoidable urgency, the Department has cut through bureaucracy and achieved results on U.S. military base reuse and cleanup; for example Secretary of Defense Perry aptly cited the Sacramento Army Depot restoration as a national model. The nation has also taken notice of the remarkable "brownfield" site remediations that have been achieved by the private sector following administrative reforms such as "prospective purchaser agreements" clarifying legal liabilities of property owners. The June 1997 opening of the world-class California Speedway in Riverside will stand as perhaps the most noticed of such breakthroughs, which are occurring up and down the state.

The Department of Pesticide Regulation continues its implementation of the strongest program of its kind in the nation. Through legislative and administrative reforms in Sacramento, and working with the federal government, the Department utilizes the most up-to-date science to remove older, untested chemicals where necessary, making available newer, safer alternatives available at a much faster rate than in the past. Having undertaken a full review of its programs, the Department will seek continued improvements as its funding base is renewed in the coming year.

The issuance of a recent report on risk assessment practices and methodology, commissioned by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, points to the great potential of that office. That report, led by Dr. James Seiber and including other distinguished scientists, is recognized as nationally significant. Its recommendations are now being implemented across the administration through your recent executive order.

The Integrated Waste Management Board can point with pride to the state's meeting its statutory goal of a 25% reduction in solid waste diverted to landfills in 1995, on track to meet the 50% goal for 2000. Their used oil and oil filter efforts, their compost market development, and their recycling development zone programs also continue to make strides.

Two additional trends you initiated will likely continue their emergence in the coming years. One is your recognition of the important international aspects of California's environmental programs. In 1992, for example, you designated Cal/EPA to participate actively in the national government's negotiation and implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This assured that California's existing environmental approaches would be considered and respected in the agreement; it also provided a necessary, broader context for our regulatory program's future direction. Later, your leadership, along with Governor Ruffo of Baja California, creating a California Border Environmental Cooperation Commission, set the standard for all border states. As a result, a California water treatment project achieved the first Mexico-U.S. Border Environment Commission certification for funding under NAFTA.

Similarly, you have recognized the tremendous opportunities for California's economy in assisting other nations, particularly in Asia as well as Mexico, through environmental technology exports and infrastructure projects. This was a constant focus of your recent trade mission to Asia, from China to Thailand to the Philippines. The subsequent joint venture agreement between a California-based company and a Chinese counterpart, to produce and introduce electric bicycles into China, demonstrates the economic opportunity as well as the changing nature of environmental regulation. The ISO 14000 round of international environmental management standards, in which Cal/EPA is intimately involved, holds promise of accelerating these positive developments.

Second, the unification of California's environmental regulatory programs, begun with the creation of Cal/EPA in 1991, continues. As has been often observed, it is only in the realm of government--not in ecology or economics--that air, water, waste and so on are viewed as separate issues. In addition to legislative and administrative changes in this direction, the construction of the Cal/EPA building will provide on-the-ground opportunities. The recent report "Unifying Environmental Protection in California", produced by a distinguished group of environmental lawyers led by William Reilly and Michael Traynor, points to additional leadership opportunities for the future.

Your environmental policies are, of course, part of a broader context. I share the view, held by many, that you have been uniquely suited to lead California through the unparalleled challenges of this decade. What is more, you have led through the day-to-day battles with an eye always focused on the distance ahead. There is an old saying: "All politics is an argument about the future." You have stood for a series of ideas critical to our state and nation's future. To safeguard our precious heritage of immigration and rule of law, you drew a line in the sand against unprecedented levels of illegal immigration. To protect our nation's historic commitment to individual rights and obligations, rather than classification by group, you led the fight for public support of the California Civil Rights Initiative. To better link today's adults with the young, you are initiating the nation's most ambitious childhood mentoring program. As a bridge to the Information Age, making old institutions new again, you are making education more widely available through the Internet. And, through strong fiscal and environmental policies, you have worked to assure that the actions of present generations do not limit the just inheritance of future generations who have no present voice.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve in your Administration. I stand ready to assist your future efforts in the remainder of your present term and beyond.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED
James M. Strock

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