Jonathan Zasloff has previously written about the California Air Resources Board's pioneering decision last week to mandate carbon-based reductions in state transportation fuels. These regulations, known as California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS), are the first of their kind in the United States.

More importantly, the LCFS is an integral part of CARB's ambitious plan to reduce aggregate state greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, as mandated under AB 32, California's Global Warming Solutions Act. Given the disproportionately high percentage of California's GHG emissions that are generated by the transportation sector–approximately 40%–successful implementation of the LCFS is critical to achievement of California's overall GHG reduction goals under AB 32.

Predictably, the regulated industry is complaining that the LCFS relies on unproven technology, and will burden the industry in already-tough economic times. If that criticism sounds familiar, it should: the automobile industry made the identical arguments when CARB had the temerity to mandate the installation of catalytic converters on motor vehicles sold in California back in the early 1970's. And we know how that turned out.

Meanwhile, CARB's adoption of the LCFS stands as a testimonial to the cutting-edge research of two thoughtful University of California scholars. One is Dan Sperling, a professor who oversees the Institute for Transportation Studies at U.C. Davis (and serves as an appointed member of CARB in his spare time). Sperling has made development and enactment of the LCFS a centerpiece of his academic work on campus, as well as his tenure as a CARB decision-maker.

The other academic largely responsible for California's LCFS is the late Alex Farrell. Professor Farrell was a faculty member of U.C. Berkeley's interdisciplinary Energy & Resources Group and Director of Berkeley's Transportation Sustainability Research Center before his untimely death last year. Professor Farrell, too, made development of California's LCFS a central part of his academic research.

The Low Carbon Fuel Standard adopted by CARB last week is in major part attributable to the visionary academic work of Professors Sperling and Farrell. That work, in turn, is in the finest tradition of applied academic scholarship. Congratulations to them both–Professor Farrell, alas, posthumously.