In a rather stunning and little-noticed op ed last week, California GOP gubernetorial candidate Meg Whitman — former CEO of EBay – called on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to suspend the implementation of AB 32. Her rationale? To create jobs in California. AB 32, also known as the Global Warming Solutions Act, cuts California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. The bill also contains a provision , Section 38599, that allows the Governor to suspend implementation of AB 32 regulations, in whole or in part, if the state faces a significant threat of economic harm. Though a Governor can only delay implementation for a year, she or he can continue the suspension upon making the same finding of economic threat.

Whitman's op ed is long on rhetoric and short on rationale, arguing simply that environmental regulations stymie economic growth. The op ed doesn't mince words: she says she'll suspend AB 32 the day she becomes Governor if Schwarzenegger doesn't do so first.

Whitman's position seems pretty clearly designed to play to the California Republican party's conservative base. At this point she's running for the Republican primary in June, 2010, so her strategy seems designed to paint herself as an anti-regulatory, anti-tax, pro business candidate. Whether her position would sit well with the general electorate that would vote in November is an entirely different question given that California is an increasingly Democratic state and given that two thirds of voters support AB 32. Republican Schwarzenegger has pretty clearly believed that progressive environmental policy is also good politics. Though his popularity in the state has plummeted, his sinking poll numbers reflect the state's budget woes, not his environmental policies.