

[California's Proposition 21](#) would add a paltry \$18 to the state's vehicle license fee, and provide \$500 million a year to the state's park system. This would vastly augment its budget, and help clear a \$1.3 billion maintenance backlog. It also would eliminate parking and user fees for the parks. Who could be against that?

Well, apparently automakers. And as [Stuart Leavenworth makes clear in the Sacramento Bee](#), that's grotesquely hypocritical:

You've likely seen the ads. A [Ford Mustang](#) zips down the road with an image of Huntington State Beach and its pier in the background....

For many years, automobile manufacturers have used California [state parks](#) as backdrops for their advertising. In this sense, they are big fans of [state parks](#).

In 2009, auto companies obtained 22 permits to film commercials at [state parks](#), according to records of the [California Film Commission](#). Some of the favored locations include Point Mugu, [Mount Tamalpais State Park](#) and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.

Yet when it comes to a measure that would help fund state parks and keep them open, the automakers are not fans. In early September, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers became the first and only group to finance a campaign against Proposition 21. The alliance's promotional materials have a nasty edge, calling the initiative a "scam."

And why would that be? Officially, it is because the automakers don't like their products being targeted for a tax that doesn't go to transportation. But that is nonsensical: consumers pay the tax directly, and besides, we're talking about \$18. More importantly, they love the parks, but somehow don't want to pay for them. Would they prefer it if parks just hike the fees to film videos there?

Leavenworth tried to get automaker spokespeople to reconcile these contradictions, but got no response: "Perhaps they were off enjoying their weekend, at a park."

