



Net zero buildings for everyone!

In [last night's California gubernatorial debate](#), Republican candidate Neel Kashkari proposed a major reform to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which requires environmental review of new projects. But rather than gutting CEQA completely, a la State-Senator-turned-Chevron-lobbyist [Michael Rubio](#), Kashkari [proposed](#) to give all projects the same breaks that the Sacramento Kings received in last year's SB 743 (Steinberg). As Kashkari explained:

When the Sacramento Kings were going to leave, and the NBA said we need a new arena...Governor Brown signed an expedited review, gave them a special deal... But instead of just giving it to those who are politically connected who can hire high-priced lobbyists, why don't we actually adopt that new standard and make it available to everyone?

And from Kashkari's [website](#):

[A]ll projects that come under CEQA challenge should be afforded the same injunctive relief and expedited review process that the Sacramento arena warranted.

So what exactly did the Sacramento Kings get? As I [described](#) at the time:

SB 743 [gave] Sacramento Kings basketball arena proponents accelerated environmental review and immunity from injunctive relief unless the project is found to jeopardize public health, safety, or archaeological resources. In exchange for these benefits, the new stadium must meet strict environmental performance measures, including net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from passenger trips to the stadium, LEED Gold certification, and compliance with the sustainable land use plan for the region under SB 375. In short, basically the same performance standards required for \$100 million projects under [AB 900](#) (2011)

So the Sacramento Kings only received the injunctive relief and expedited review upon pledging to meet high environmental standards related to energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions. Somehow I don't think that's the standard Kashkari wants to apply to all businesses in California. First of all, it's unworkable given the range of projects covered by CEQA (a transit line, for example, isn't even eligible for LEED gold certification, which is limited to "buildings"). Secondly, even if it was workable, it would ensure greater environmental protection, which Kashkari doesn't seem to prioritize. Third, it would place a huge burden on the courts to expedite these projects, and Kashkari doesn't seem likely to spend more money to boost their staffing to be able to handle the additional caseloads.

To echo the governor's words last night, this "glib" proposal belies the true nature of the deal that the Kings received. Coupled with Kashkari's plan to shift high speed rail bond funds to additional water storage projects (a move that would be [illegal](#) — not to mention a betrayal of the majority of voters who approved those funds in 2008 for high speed rail only), the candidate appears to be playing fast and loose with the facts, at least on environmental issues.