

Schwarzenegger urges faster action on climate

by Dana Wilkie

WASHINGTON - In a speech coinciding with his appearance in a Newsweek cover story on global warming, Gov. Schwarzenegger on Wednesday told an audience of college students that those who refuse to address climate change are "fanatics."

Buoyed by new polls showing his popularity has rebounded, and by international attention as the cover man on this week's Newsweek and this month's Fortune magazines, California's Republican governor appeared to be addressing those he thinks have been too slow to counter the manmade components of global warming. Schwarzenegger, who has been at odds with the Bush administration over how aggressively to address climate change, said mainstream scientists, company CEOs and a majority of Americans are convinced "global warming and climate change is real and that we have to do something about it."

"So who are the fanatics now?" he asked during his address at Georgetown University's Gaston Hall, which was packed with young adults who twice gave him standing ovations. "They are the ones who are in denial."

The governor never specified whom he meant by "they." Instead, he likened the movement to combat global warming as one gaining the sort of mainstream acceptance now enjoyed by body-building, a pastime he said was once dominated by people - such as himself - who were considered gym fanatics.

"Environmentalists were no fun," said Schwarzenegger, whose speech was part of a Newsweek-sponsored "Global Environment Leadership Conference."

"They were like prohibitionists at the fraternity party. We have to make it mainstream, we have to make it sexy, we have to make it attractive so everyone wants to participate," he said.

On the stage beside the governor, perched atop an easel, was a blowup of the latest issue of Newsweek, which features a suit-clad Schwarzenegger twirling a globe atop his finger, with the headline: "Save the Planet - Or Else."

The cover story reports that the governor "is peddling feel-good, consumer-friendly environmentalism that resonates not only with the fluorescent-light-bulb-worshiping hybrid drivers, but also with big business and those who think 'green' is a synonym for 'Chicken Little.' His faith in the power of technology and free markets to slow global warming is neither depressing nor polarizing."

Schwarzenegger's remarks came as the Field Poll released a new survey showing California voters see global warming as a serious problem. The random survey of 523 registered voters, conducted late last month, found that eight of 10 California voters describe global warming as a very serious (56 percent) or somewhat serious (25 percent) problem. Just one in five California voters approve of the job the federal government is doing to address the global warming problem, while more than three times as many, or 66 percent, disapprove.

Voters are less critical of state government. The survey found that 43 percent approve of the state's efforts to address global warming, while another 43 percent disapprove.

The Field Poll also reported last week that the governor's standing among the state's voters has rebounded to nearly its peak level of his first year in office.

Last year Schwarzenegger and the state legislature passed a first-in-the-nation law requiring that California reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases - the heat-trapping gases blamed for global warming - by 25 percent by the year 2020. Earlier this year, Schwarzenegger used his executive powers to require a 10 percent reduction in the carbon content of all transportation fuels by 2020. And last month, the governor sought to shape national policy on global warming when he and four other Western governors signed a collective strategy to curtail greenhouse gas emission from Santa Fe to Seattle.

Some congressional Democrats - including California Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer - want to use last year's law as a model for national legislation. Before signing the state bill, however, Schwarzenegger first tried to water it down to appease business interests.

The governor's fight against global warming has earned him some criticism. Michigan's automakers accuse him of costing their industry \$85 billion nationally, and a billboard in the state reads: "Arnold to Michigan: Drop Dead."

Said Schwarzenegger to Georgetown students Wednesday: "What I'm saying to Michigan is: 'Get off your butt.'"

If he has earned criticism from the auto industry, the governor has won praise and recognition from other quarters. He is featured on the covers of Outdoor, Newsweek and Fortune magazines as an international "green" leader. He will speak Thursday to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City on his environmental efforts. And at the 2007 conference of the British Conservative Party this September, he is expected to promote a brand of Republicanism that he says can be both friendly to the environment, and to the economy.

"We can do both: we can protect the environment and we can protect the economy," Schwarzenegger said Wednesday of climate-friendly technologies, noting that cell phones cost upwards of \$1,600 when the technology was first new, but that he recently purchased one for his daughter for less than \$90.

The governor met Wednesday morning with Stephen Johnson, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator, to press for a federal waiver allowing California to restrict auto emissions. The meeting produced no commitments from Johnson.

He met Wednesday afternoon with Feinstein, who endorsed his \$6 billion water infrastructure plan that calls for building more surface and groundwater storage, protecting the Delta and promoting conservation measures.

On Wednesday night, Schwarzenegger was scheduled to fly to New York to dine with Gov. Elliot Spitzer and to appear at a fundraiser.

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