

TEXAS VS CALIFORNIA

Anyone who has watched a television game show such as *The Price Is Right* that features luxury car models being given away as prizes is familiar with the idea of California emissions standards. While the U.S. government has enacted a series of minimum standards regarding auto emissions, California has long been at the forefront of this activity, regularly creating standards that exceed those required by the federal government. Since the 1970s, California has enacted the most restrictive standards regarding the gases coming out of the exhaust pipes on cars, trucks, and other automobiles. Eleven other states have also enacted auto emission standards beyond the minimum standards set by the federal government.

Several agencies in California are involved in the regulation of auto emissions, including the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Consumer Affairs-Bureau of Automotive Repair. Key pollutants subject to regulation include carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, and ozone. These agencies in the past led the United States in developing additional equipment on vehicles to limit emissions, in requiring the use of unleaded gas, and in mandating routine inspections of vehicles. For example, California required the use of fuel injectors and catalytic converters long before they became standard across the United States. Current efforts by California include those to increase sales of zero-emission vehicles, to encourage the use of alternative fuels, and to boost the fuel efficiency of cars.

Opponents of California's efforts at regulation note that the result of such differing regulations is variations in automobile standards across states. This variation creates additional costs to makers of cars, which are then passed on to the people who buy cars and trucks. In the end, they argue, the U.S. government should be the appropriate level of government to regulate auto emissions.

Texas, in contrast, maintains little state legislation above and beyond the minimum standards established by the U.S. government. One of the few requirements in Texas is the imposition of annual auto emission standards in metropolitan areas such as Houston that have consistently high levels of air pollution linked to automobiles. Texas also requires all state, city, and county governments that own fifteen or more vehicles to purchase some low-emission vehicles.

THINKING Critically

- ★ How is California a leader in the regulation of auto emissions?
- ★ How does California's attempt to regulate auto emissions affect the size and scope of its government?
- ★ Do you think that Texas and other states should set standards that are stricter than those set by the U.S. government?
- ★ What do you think the advantage of Texas adopting stricter emissions standards might be?