

Close Window

Send To Printer

Hybrids vehicle of choice for more and more legislators

Associated Press
LA Daily News

Article Last Updated: 01/20/2007 09:39:49 PM PST

SACRAMENTO - Nearly half of the state Assembly is switching to hybrids as their choice for state-leased vehicles, a marked change from the gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles and luxury sedans that have long been favored by lawmakers.

Thirty-nine of the 80 Assembly members now are driving hybrids, up from 27 last year. Of the 40 senators, 13 opted for hybrids, three more than last year.

State lawmakers choose their official vehicles, which are subsidized by taxpayers.

Legislators had been criticized for voting for clean air and greenhouse gas laws while driving higher-polluting vehicles.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Nu ez, D-Los Angeles, for instance, was driving a 2003 Ford Explorer last year as he pushed passage of Assembly Bill 32, the landmark law to fight global warming. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has two Hummers converted to use alternative fuels, is seeking to tighten tailpipe emissions again this year.

"I do believe in the notion that you have to practice what you preach. In my case, the alternative is here," said Nu ez, who now squires a new Toyota Highlander Hybrid.

Being green isn't cheap, however. The Assembly doubled the extra allowance for hybrids to \$6,000 to offset the higher price of those vehicles, which Nu ez suspects encouraged more lawmakers to make the switch.

Across the Rotunda, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, has yet to be converted. His chamber offers no incentive for leasing hybrids, and Perata drives a maroon Dodge Charger.

"It's good to see that our legislators are walking the walk more than they had in the past when it comes to choosing their state vehicles," Sierra Club lobbyist Bill Magavern said.