

## California's 'Calgreen' is filled with political correctness

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=3730#more-3730>

According to an article last fall by Joel Kotkin in Forbes.com, California is paying its bills with IOUs, its credit rating is shot and instead of it producing the seventh largest GDP in the world as it has in the past, it's more like Argentina.

He wrote, "Burdened by taxes and ever-growing regulation, the state is routinely rated by executives as having among the worst business climates in the nation."

One blogger wrote, "It turns out an increasing number of our fellow Californians are finding it difficult to live here... they're moving out of California. Who can blame them? California is expensive, it's crowded, and our policymakers have let us down repeatedly."

With high unemployment, skyrocketing property taxes, disastrous foreclosure rates and a state budget that is in deficit, Californians have been leaving the state by the thousands for years. Even so, the population is increasing - due to immigration.

So what does California do? They pass their new mandatory Green Building Standards Code, otherwise known as Calgreen.

Adopted on January 12 of this year to begin on January 1, 2011, Governor Schwarzenegger announced the new bill: "With this first-in-the nation mandatory green building standards code, California continues to pave the way in energy efficiency and environmental protection. Today's action lays the foundation for the move to greener buildings constructed with environmentally advanced building practices that decrease waste, reduce energy use and conserve resources. The code will help us meet our goals of curbing global warming and achieving 33 percent renewable energy by 2020 and promotes development of more sustainable communities by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving energy efficiency in every new home, office building or public structure."

Structures built under Calgreen will have to pass a state inspection, which will look for compliance to the new code. For examples, the code will require a twenty percent reduction of indoor water use, require separate water meters for indoor and outdoor water waste, and require a fifty percent diversion of construction waste from landfills to recycling.

Not everyone is happy about the new code. Some think it too strenuous, others not strenuous enough.

Marc J. Cohen of Eco-Structure Magazine writes, "For developers, the actual requirements of Calgreen are not overly onerous, and in many ways are less demanding than the already existing green standards adopted by many California cities, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is

the record-keeping and compliance certification that admittedly may be challenging for both project teams and already overburdened code officials.”

By this one might think that Calgreen might actually reduce the suffering of the people of California, but in reality it is a code of minimums that can be exceeded by existing codes. And after all, California is simply following the lead of an Obama executive order written in October of 2009 that is intended to make the federal government the leader in green. The order established a new position, the “chief greening officer,” a post that has not yet been filled.

In my years as a practicing architect, I have always found building codes to be politically benign. They are written with one goal, and that is to save lives. The International Building Code, which the majority of cities in America use, including Tulsa, is certainly an example of a politically benign code.

The recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile exemplified how important building codes can be. Chile, who suffered a much larger earthquake than Haiti, suffered deaths in the hundreds as opposed to Haiti’s hundreds of thousands, and that is primarily because they had stringent building codes.

Green codes, such as Calgreen, and another code that is looming on the horizon , the International Green Code, are not politically benign. In many respects, they represent the solution to a problem that has been shown not to exist, global warming. It would be equally wrong to codify green building practices that place an excessive burden on an economy that desperately needs the construction industry to rebound if those practices are questionable, expensive or seek to achieve political goals.

I hope that Oklahoma’s leadership, from the state level on down to the city level, will see California as an example of what not to do. Oklahoma should be where Californians come to find freedom and a better way of life.

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