



# CALIFORNIA ENERGY MARKETS

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## Mary Nichols Receives PANC Achievement Award

The Power Association of Northern California has selected California Air Resources Board Chair Mary Nichols to receive its annual achievement award for 2017, in recognition of Nichols' many years of public service and advocacy on behalf of the environment and public health.

Nichols accepted the award and gave a well-received speech on Jan. 23 at a luncheon hosted by PANC at the City Club of San Francisco. Attendees included representatives of utilities and community choice aggregators, independent energy producers, project developers, energy consultants and attorneys.

Nancy Ryan, a partner at Energy and Environmental Economics and a former member of the California Public Utilities Commission, presented the award to Nichols.

Under Nichols' leadership, CARB has overseen a number of successful programs targeting air pollution, most recently with the implementation of California's greenhouse-gas emissions-reduction programs, Ryan noted.

"With Mary at the helm, CARB has become the nation's premier greenhouse-gas regulator and a major force on the global stage," Ryan said.

Nichols grew up in upstate New York, and came to California after graduating from Yale Law School. She was first appointed to the Air Resources Board by Gov. Jerry Brown during his first stint as governor, and she chaired the agency from 1979 to 1983. In 1989, Nichols founded the Los Angeles office of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

During the Clinton administration, Nichols served as assistant administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's air and radiation program, and under Gov. Gray Davis, she was California's resources secretary. In 2007, Nichols was appointed to CARB by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and she has chaired the agency since.

The award comes as CARB is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Nichols recalled "how ugly the smog was, how you could smell it and taste it" in Southern California 50 years ago.

"We would not have been able to achieve anything like the kind of growth that we have achieved in California if we hadn't found a way to tackle that problem," Nichols said.

Nichols noted that levels of pollution in California have dropped between 75 percent and 99 percent over the last five decades, even as the state's population has doubled and vehicle miles traveled have quadrupled. Premature deaths due to smog have dropped, she said, as air quality has improved, with cars

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today emitting a tiny fraction of the pollutants emitted in the 1960s.

“It was a heroic effort,” Nichols stated, one that was neither easy nor without controversy.

CARB estimates that for every \$1 the agency has spent, there are \$38 in benefits over the 50 years.

“That’s a pretty good leverage,” Nichols said.

Looking ahead, Nichols highlighted that CARB has broken ground on a zero-net-energy laboratory in Riverside where the agency will continue its work on both atmospheric sciences and vehicle emissions, in cooperation with the University of California, Riverside. “It’s going to be amazing,” Nichols said of the future state-of-the-art facility.

CARB will continue to focus on motor-vehicle emissions, which have been central to air-quality issues in the state and represent the biggest contributor to global warming, Nichols said. It is the transportation sector that is responsible for the majority of California’s contribution to GHG emissions, she noted, and continues to be central to the way the state economy works.

The agency takes “a lot of pride in our work in the power sector,” Nichols said, noting that the sector has done “a bang-up job” of providing leadership to help advance renewables, efficiency, energy storage and the like.

The state’s recently adopted climate-change scoping plan, which contains a framework for achieving a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, is a “pretty big vision and



CARB Chair Mary Nichols addresses PANC members after receiving the association’s annual achievement award. Photo: Leora Broydo Vestel

definitely a large challenge,” Nichols said, but one that she believes is achievable with a high degree of confidence, given the state’s successful track record to date.

CARB is planning a special board meeting and anniversary celebration on Feb. 8, 50 years to the day since the board’s first-ever meeting in February 1968.

–*Leora Broydo Vestel*