

# What's Wrong with Banning Black Cars?

*By L.K. Samuels*

When a proposal in California to [ban black painted cars was revealed](#) in March 2009, the blogosphere and talk radio buzzed with cries of "outrageous." The state legislature, under the auspices of the California Air Resource Board, pushed to reduce auto emissions by controlling the color of vehicles. Because black paint encourages heat absorption, any reflective material painted over dark-hued cars would likely fail to stop reflective heat, violating the 2006 California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32). And since black is the second most popular color for cars, the opposition was intense. In the face of angry voters, the eco-bureaucrats naturally back-pedaled on this unpopular provision.

But one wonders what is so awful about outlawing dark-colored vehicles? Why complain about the lack of individual choice?

In recent years, America's policies have taken a sharp turn down the road of "banamania." Some West Coast cities have already banned plastic shopping bags, certain dishwashing detergents, and Styrofoam containers. The U.S. Congress outlawed the broadcasting of analog TV signals as well as sale of incandescent light bulbs. At least with the incandescent light bulb ban, which goes into effect in 2014, the government still lets people buy the more energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs even though they are laced with highly toxic mercury.

American lawmakers seems to be on an outlawing-everything spree.

The California Energy Commission is exploring regulations to [outlaw energy-sucking big-screen televisions](#) for the noble cause of the environment, denying charges that it wants to simply control people and do a little social engineering. In 2004, the California legislature banned teenagers from artificial tanning booths, citing increases in skin cancer as the reason. Some suggested that the lawmakers should have also outlawed tanning on the beach, but the sun refused to comply. In another case, local authorities have banned water bottles, mostly at universities and government buildings. In New Jersey, lawmakers nearly outlawed "Brazilian" bikini waxes.

So the question becomes, why all the fuss over the color of a car?

We've become a society hell-bent on banning whatever the political elite or some lobbying group doesn't like. Get used to it. So what if the state's gone wild? The legislature has been doing it for decades. We even criminalize particular vegetation. In fact, federal and state governments spend billions of dollars annually to eradicate a common variety of weed.

Since much of the banning is done in the name of the environment, you can expect more where that came from. Now that CO<sup>2</sup> has been classified as a greenhouse pollutant considered harmful because of its supposed climate change properties, it is only a matter of time before the [biggest greenhouse gas is criminalized](#). Water vapor makes up over 95 percent of greenhouse gas, so it must be considered far more dangerous than the CO<sup>2</sup> and thus must be labeled as a harmful gas, outlawed and forced out of the atmosphere. How about gravity? People have been saying for years that gravity sucks! Why not liberate people from its heavy effect? We could all get around better without that annoying limitation of weight, and save all that money from expensive dieting, exercise, and weight-loss programs.

Why not let the political system ban all sorts of inanimate objects, for whatever reason? Other democratic nations do it all the time. The Australian government recently banned child pornography on the internet. Unfortunately, the ban was soon extended to include many other types of sites. But nobody was supposed to know. When the international whistleblower site Wikileaks posted the banned list, the Australian Communications and Media Authority banned Wikileaks, which had discovered that [blocked sites had nothing to do with porn](#) most of the.

But the Australian censorship regulators had to do something to stop porn, so they imposed stiff penalties for violators. Any Aussie caught informing the public about the secret list can be jailed for up to 10 years. And if a Website or blogger unknowingly links to one to the secretly outlawed Websites, that person's site can be secretly listed on the secret list as well! The penalty for linking to secret banned sites can be as high as \$11,000 per day, an amount that recently was [levied on an anti-abortion site](#). After being taken offline, Wikileaks only terse comment was: "The first rule of censorship is that you cannot talk about censorship."

But banning inanimate objects wouldn't harm free speech in the United States. Or would it?

Actually, a federal judge in San Francisco issued a [2008 injunction to ban and shut down the U.S. Wikileaks site after it posted embarrassing documents](#) (the injunction was lifted two weeks later). Maybe banning things could lead to unwanted consequences. Maybe banning black cars is also a free-speech issue. Maybe outlawing things could lead to censorship of ... [CENSORED].

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