In late December, Governor Lamont cemented the fact that there’s a clear disconnect between his opinion about the proposed ban on the sale of gas-powered vehicles and how residents feel about the idea of state government forcing them into electric cars.

Speaking before a packed house of business leaders from our state’s Middlesex region, the governor made jokes related to the cost of electric vehicles and “range anxiety”—the latter a colloquial reference to concerns about how many miles a fully charged vehicle can travel. His comedic dalliance, which included a promise for more mental health funding to help Republicans overcome range anxiety, was understandably panned in the news media.

Considering his myopic view on the subject—all but ignoring concerns about grid capacity and electric generation—it’s no wonder the Governor has failed, so far, to get his California-modeled electric vehicle mandate through the legislature. He isn’t giving up, though, and the new legislative session, which begins Feb. 7, could feature discussion on the topic initiated by legislators who believe in the ban.

If a recent poll on the issue is any indication, stiff constituent headwinds await. A survey of 500 likely voters, conducted by an automotive industry trade association, showed that 59 percent opposed a ban. And 63 percent of the unaffiliated voters felt the same. That sentiment played out across the societal spectrum in every corner of the state. Opposition is as strong in Fairfield County communities as it is in urban centers and east-of-the-river municipalities. View the poll at repcandelora.com

Talk about the survey here in Connecticut comes as news nationwide points to increasing skepticism about any state’s ability to meet aggressive zero emissions mandates, a cause championed by the Biden administration. Consumer confidence, driven by concerns such as vehicle price and widespread availability of charging stations, is low. Consequently, there’s a glut of electric vehicles on dealer lots, and manufacturers are rethinking some investments resulting from their headlong dive into the market.

Back here, in the Land of Steady Habits, a solution to perhaps the biggest barrier—the ability to supply power to meet the needs of an electric vehicle mandate—feels as elusive as ever. Compounding the problem, state utility regulators are in open conflict with electric companies who will be expected to perform upgrades to their infrastructure to accomplish that goal. It’s a quandary for the Governor and the dwindling number of legislative Democrats who openly support the ban. They want the companies—and their ratepayers—to invest in upgrades but at the same time are crimping utilities’ attempts to generate revenue they say they need to maintain current services effectively.

Residents’ sentiment about challenges such as these were finally acknowledged by the legislature’s Democrat majority leadership back in November, when it was announced they would pull back the proposed ban with the goal of retooling and recharging the push at an undetermined time. My hunch is that this legislative session will feature a symbolic push to appease special interest groups who support the ban, with a full-powered policy campaign to follow next year—after Election Day. After all, promoting and voting for a deeply unpopular proposal such as this carries electoral implications.

According to the aforementioned poll, more than half of voters surveyed said they would be less likely to vote for an elected official who supports a ban. Fifty-six percent of non-partisan voters indicated they are less like to vote for an elected official who supports the proposal.

For the those who currently control the levers of our state government, that could be the issue that matters most.

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