

Oakland Tribune



Serving Oakland for 134 years

Friday | August 8, 2008

50 cent

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

LOCAL • BAY AREA

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2008

510

A7

Boxer honors county's environmental program

By Chris Metinko
STAFF WRITER

U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer continued handing out environmental awards around the East Bay on Thursday, this time honoring Alameda County's eco-friendly policies.

The chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee also found herself answering a myriad of questions ranging from offshore drilling to a possible vice presidential candidacy.

"It would make as much sense to put me on the (Democratic presidential) ticket as it would to put this podium on the ticket," said Boxer, D-Calif., during a question-and-answer session with the press at the county's Juvenile Justice Center. Boxer made the trip to San Leandro to present a "Conservation Champion Award" to the county's Sustainability Program, which focuses on the development of green buildings and other eco-friendly ideas.

Boxer took a tour of the Juvenile Justice Center, which opened last year and is the prime example of the county's efforts to implement its Sustainability Program. The building won a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold rating, with an 850-kilowatt solar panel system — enough to power 1,000 homes. The center also was built with site-grading equipment that used biodiesel fuel, preventing more than 200 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Boxer was taken by her tour of the building, which she took with county Supervisor Keith Carson and county Administrator Susan Muranishi, among others.

"It's quite an experience — a wonderful experience," Boxer said of the tour.

Earlier this week, Boxer presented another "Conservation Champion Award" to executives at Amyris Biotechnologies Inc. in Emeryville, which is finding ways to produce biofuel by having genetically engineered microbes feed on renewable sources such as sugarcane and cellulose-heavy crops.

Boxer said her office created the award to pay tribute to good news, and get away from the media's "if it bleeds, it leads" mind-set. She said she hopes the award will create

more awareness of environmental issues, something she feels is already happening.

"Change is coming, and yes we can — if you catch my drift," smiled Boxer, an obvious allusion to Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign slogan.

Just as she had done earlier in the week at the bio-tech in Emeryville, Boxer used the occasion to discuss other environmental and political issues with reporters:

► Regarding offshore drill-

ing, Boxer said the country needs an overall energy plan to deal with its needs. "We need an energy policy," she said. "All we have now is an Exxon policy, which is drill, drill — burn, burn."

► On the topic of protests in China during the Olympics, the senator said she supports all peaceful demonstrations, and the games will provide China with a chance to reflect. "This is a moment for China to take stock of herself," Boxer said.

► Boxer said she believes people do see the urgency for more AIDS research and funding, especially in light of new data that showed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may have underestimated the number of new AIDS cases in the country by as much as 40 percent. "I think the new statistics were very shocking to people," she said.

Reach Chris Metinko at 510-763-5418 or cmetinko@bayareanewsgroup.com.



MIKE LUCIA/STAFF

BARBARA BOXER answers journalists' questions with Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson on Thursday at the county's Juvenile Justice Center in San Leandro.