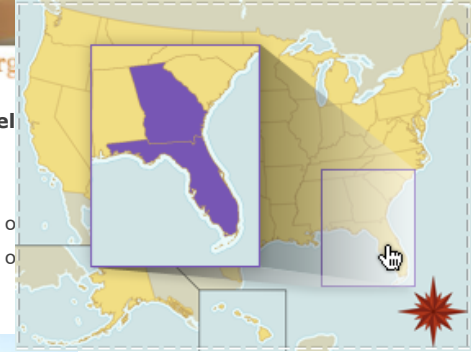




October 2008

Get Local



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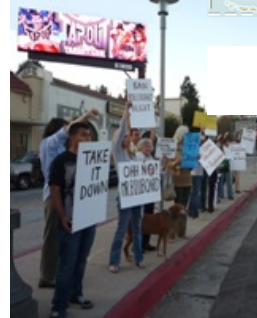
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California embroiled in billboard controversies; nation could feel effects

The state of California is at the center of several brewing controversies involving advertising, and the way they play out could create ripple effects around the rest of the country.

In Los Angeles, despite a 2002 city ordinance which ostensibly banned new billboards, the city has seen new signs sprouting up all over, including enormous building-sized supergraphic displays draped on the sides of skyscrapers.

Making matters worse, because of an ill-conceived legal settlement with major billboard companies in 2006, hundreds of existing signs are slated to be converted to digital, blanketing the city in electronic blight.



Protesters line up near a digital billboard in Hollywood

The runaway proliferation of signs has [citizens up in arms](#) and several members of the city council [promising to crack down](#) on the billboard industry. The Los Angeles Planning Commission has recommended a [one-year moratorium](#) on the conversion of any billboards to digital.

Scenic America makes the news:

[Group blasts Caltrans plan for highway signs](#)

[Caltrans eyes making message signs billboards](#)

[California mulls ads on road alert signs](#)

[Selling ads on freeway alert boards considered](#)

KCET-TV, southern California's PBS affiliate, recently produced a two-part series on the billboard crisis in Los Angeles. Scenic America President Kevin Fry was interviewed extensively for the program. Click to watch [part one](#), [part two](#), and [this follow-up](#) to the series which reveals new initiatives planned by private citizens and the city council to reign in the billboard industry.

In Sacramento, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has [sent a proposal](#) to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters that would, according to Scenic America, spell disaster for the safety of that state's motoring public.

Caltrans is [proposing](#) to allow [commercial advertising](#) on the state's 674 official electronic message boards. These signs are located along the right of way and are normally used to provide emergency information to drivers.

Scenic America unequivocally condemns this proposal, and has sent [this letter](#) to Secretary Peters outlining our opposition. The media received [this press release](#) from Scenic America, and our position paper on the matter is [available here](#) as a free PDF download.

A decision to allow Caltrans to convert these signs would have implications for the rest of the country. "If California does this," said Fry, "many other states will also, and the

Scenic Quote of the Month

"It would constitute a violation of federal regulations, which clearly state that these signs are not an advertising medium."

~ **Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, regarding that state's proposal to convert highway signs into digital billboards, in a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters.**

consequences will be catastrophic, both from public policy and public safety standpoints."

Scenic Trivia Question

Q: Who was the featured speaker at Scenic America's "Leadership for a Scenic Century" conference in Baltimore, Maryland in May 1997?

A: Charles Kuralt, long-time anchor of the CBS series "On the Road," and author of the acclaimed memoir, *A Life on the Road*, spoke movingly about our nation, which he called "The Goodliest Land."

Scenic America conducts byways workshop in Colorado

Scenic America recently completed another scenic conservation workshop in conjunction with the America's Byways Resource Center.

Located in south central Colorado, the [Frontier Pathways Scenic and Historic Byway](#) was chosen for a workshop because of its remarkable landscapes and rich frontier history. The goal of the workshop was to serve as a catalyst for creating a plan for protecting the valued visual character along the byway.

Approximately thirty stakeholders from neighboring communities, municipal governments, and the private sector participated in the workshop.

Brad Cownover, Director of Scenic Conservation for Scenic America, facilitated the workshop along with Bonnie Hundrieser from the Byways Resource Center.

Local coordination for the workshop was handled by Bill Zwick, long-time byway board member, Mel Porth, current president of the byway organization, and staff from the City of Pueblo Planning Department.



The Sangre de Cristo Mountains along the Frontier Pathways Scenic and Historic Byway - photo by Brad Cownover

A complete summary report of the workshop has been developed by Cownover and is [available here](#) as a free PDF download.

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Click [here](#) to tell your friends and family about Scenic Overlook and spread the word about Scenic America.

"Visual quality matters deeply," Fry tells Alabama conference attendees

Scenic America recently brought its message about the importance of preserving the visual character of roadways and communities to Birmingham, Alabama at the annual Building Communities Conference of the [Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham](#).

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Change is Inevitable, Ugliness is Not!



Birmingham, Ala. skyline - photo by Pete Collins



The conference, entitled "Gateway to Greenspace: Connecting Citizens, Governments and Businesses," brought together over a hundred community leaders, public officials, and design professionals to hear guest speakers and to discuss aspects of environmentally conscious development and growth.

One conference speaker, Edward McMahon, a former president of Scenic America and now senior resident fellow at the [Urban Land Institute](#), calls this new type of development "green infrastructure."

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Current Scenic America president, Kevin Fry, delivered a presentation that spelled out the range of scenic conservation issues the Birmingham region should consider in order to preserve or restore the visual quality of its communities and landscapes.

To illustrate the various aspects of the scenic conservation agenda, Fry focused on topics such as main street development, sign control, the reduction of visual intrusions such as overhead power lines, the urgent need to preserve open space and working landscapes, and the vital role played by context-sensitive transportation planning in protecting community character.

"The visual quality of place matters deeply," he said, "and has a large, but often neglected, effect on the quality of our lives and the nature of human experience." He urged Alabamans to take a fresh look at their communities and make a commitment to improving the visual quality of their cities, towns, roadways, and countryside, and to ensure that public policies are in place to achieve their scenic goals.

Conference presentations are available for download on the [planning commission's website](#).

Scenic Virginia announces scenic photo competition winners

In June, [Scenic Virginia](#) issued a statewide call for photographers to submit their digital photographs of the state's views and vistas for the organization's first-ever Viewshed Photo Competition.

A prestigious panel of judges has selected First Place Winners in the competition's five categories, an overall Grand Prize Winner, and multiple Honorable Mentions.

"Scenic Virginia conceived the 2008 Scenic Viewshed Photo Competition to celebrate our Tenth Anniversary, and to create statewide awareness of the stunning views that exist throughout the Commonwealth," said president Eugenia Anderson-Ellis. "We are thrilled with the response. We received almost 500 entries - many breathtaking vistas of excellent quality."



The grand prize winning photo

- by Kirk Carter

Winners will be recognized at Scenic Virginia's 2008 Scenic Awards luncheon on Thursday, November 13 at the historic Kent-Valentine House in Richmond. [Click here](#) to see all the winning photographs.

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