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Five Western Governors Announce Regional Greenhouse Gas Reduction Agreement

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Governors of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington today announced the formation of the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative to implement a joint strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the annual winter meeting of the National Governors Association, Governors Janet Napolitano, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bill Richardson, Ted Kulongoski and Chris Gregoire signed the agreement that directs their respective states to, within the next six months, develop a regional target for reducing greenhouse gases. During the next 18 months, they will devise a market-based program, such as a load-based cap and trade program to reach the target. The five states also have agreed to participate in a multi-state registry to track and manage greenhouse gas emissions in their region.

The Western Regional Climate Action Initiative builds on existing greenhouse gas reduction efforts in the individual states as well as two existing regional efforts. In 2003, California, Oregon and Washington created the West Coast Global Warming Initiative, and in 2006, Arizona and New Mexico launched the Southwest Climate Change Initiative.

Individually, the five states have shown national and international leadership as they tackle global warming; each state has adopted or committed to adopting state reduction goals, clean tailpipe standards, mandatory emissions reporting and renewable portfolio standards to accelerate the transition to non-fossil fuel based energy sources.

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“In the absence of meaningful federal action, it is up to the States to take action to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this country,” said Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano. “Western States are being particularly hard-hit by the effects of climate change.”

"This MOU sets the stage for a regional cap and trade program, which will provide a powerful framework for developing a national cap and trade program," said California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "This agreement shows the power of states to lead our nation addressing climate change."

“With this agreement, states are once again taking the lead on combating global climate change – while Washington, D.C. sits on its hands,” said New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. “This historic agreement signals our commitment to tackling the problem head-on at the regional level and building on efforts in our individual states.”

“Today’s announcement shows how the West continues to lead the way in addressing the most pressing environmental challenge of our time,” said Governor Ted Kulongoski. “Together, we are putting ourselves on a path to reduce greenhouse emissions and create a sustainable energy future –a model and example for rest of the nation.”

“We have all seen the science and we must increase our efforts to respond,” said Washington Governor Chris Gregoire. “We must implement what we all have put in place, and work together to develop a regional market approach. Together, we can reduce our climate pollution, grow jobs and move toward energy independence.”

Western states have suffered from prolonged drought, decreased snowfall, increased and earlier snowmelt, and more severe and devastating forest and rangeland fires in recent years as a result of changes in the climate. The just-released Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the Western United States will be especially affected by increased temperatures and climatic changes resulting from the build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

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