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## Arizona quits Western climate endeavor

Cutting greenhouse gases too expensive, Brewer says

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by [Shaun McKinnon](#) - Feb. 11, 2010 12:00 AM  
*The Arizona Republic*

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Arizona will no longer participate in a groundbreaking attempt to limit greenhouse-gas emissions across the West, a change in policy by Gov. Jan Brewer that will include a review of all the state's efforts to combat climate change.

Brewer stopped short of pulling Arizona out of the multistate coalition that plans to regulate greenhouse gases starting in 2012. But she made it clear in an executive order that Arizona will not endorse the emission-control plan or any program that could raise costs for consumers and businesses.

State officials said the policy shift was rooted in concerns that the controversial emissions plan would slow the state's economic recovery. Brewer says the state should focus less on regulations and more on renewable energy and investments by businesses that can create green jobs.

The governor also ordered the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to take another look at stricter vehicle-emissions rules set to take effect in 2012. Automakers said the rules, based on those adopted by California, would raise the cost of a new car significantly.

The governor's order is another blow to the Western Climate Initiative, a group of seven states and four Canadian provinces that joined forces in 2007 after growing impatient with the federal government to address climate change.

The coalition agreed to implement a regional "cap and trade" system, which limits how much pollution companies can emit, then allows them to buy and sell pollution credits.

Supporters say the system lets the marketplace make polluting more costly, encouraging emitters - factories, power plants and others - to clean up more quickly. So far, California is the only U.S. state in the Western coalition prepared to start the program on schedule in January 2012. The recession and political opposition has slowed legislation to implement the rules in other states.

The Western group is one of several state-led coalitions formed to regulate greenhouse gases. A group of Northeastern states is in the second year of its cap-and-trade system, one that only regulates electric utilities.

A federal plan has stalled in the Senate and is unlikely to move anytime soon.

Arizona's chief environmental regulator said Brewer's order, which was signed last week without fanfare, should be seen as a step forward in Arizona's attempts to foster renewable energy and green jobs.

"Arizona needs a green-and-grow approach rather than a cap-and-trade approach," ADEQ Director Benjamin Grumbles said. "We can make environmental and economic progress, and we can do it by staying engaged and creating green-job opportunities."

Brewer ordered the state to continue converting its vehicle fleet so that by January 2012, all vehicles used by the state are hybrids, meet low greenhouse-gas emission standards or use some form of alternative fuel.

The governor also said Arizona can remain active with the Western coalition by exploring policies related to solar power and other renewable energy sources, growth policies that limit pollution or steps to adapt to the changing climate.

"It's very important for the state to stay engaged, to be at the table, but it's also important to convey clearly our position on how to make progress," Grumbles said.

"Right now, given the economic downturn, given the complexity of the cap-and-trade scheme being developed, we're not going to be supportive of it."

Arizona joined the effort under its previous governor, Janet Napolitano. The states involved agreed to the cap-and-trade idea, but each would have to implement the rules at its own state level.

Brewer said legislative approval would be required for Arizona to participate in the regional cap-and-trade plan.

The Legislature has attempted several times to dismantle the state's climate-change programs and forbid its participation in the cap-and-trade system. Leaders said Wednesday that lawmakers are unlikely to reconsider their positions.

"I do not believe they would," said Sen. Carolyn Allen, R-Scottsdale, a member of the Senate's Natural Resources, Infrastructure and Public Debt Committee. "But this Legislature is full of surprises."

Environmental groups expressed disappointment at Brewer's decision. Arizona had been a founding member of the Western climate group and had signed on to the cap-and-trade blueprint released in September 2008.

"I think it's embarrassing for the state of Arizona," said Sandy Bahr of the Sierra Club in Phoenix. "It demonstrates a real lack of understanding of how significant of a threat climate change is to the state. We ought to be standing at the front of the line to look at solutions."

Diane Brown, executive director of the advocacy group Arizona PIRG, said Arizona doesn't have to abandon other policies that could help reduce global-warming emissions, such as efforts to increase energy efficiency and reduce vehicle pollution.

"It is important for Arizona to remain at the table with colleagues in other Western states," she said. "A number of policies can still take place to reduce global-warming emissions and, in a state with increasing population, it's particularly important to get ahold of the situation."

**Republic reporter Casey Newton contributed to this article.**

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### **Governor's executive order on climate-change issues**

Gov. Jan Brewer issued an executive order revising some of Arizona's climate-change policies. Included in the order:

- Arizona will remain a member of the Western Climate Initiative, a multistate coalition, but will not participate in a regional cap-and-trade plan to limit greenhouse-gas emissions. The plan was set to take effect in January 2012.
- The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality will study new vehicle-emissions rules set to take effect in 2012 and could recommend changes. The state also will monitor proposed federal rules.
- Brewer will appoint a 15-member Climate Change Oversight Group to monitor work by the Western Climate Initiative, federal agencies and Congress. The group will

include representatives from power utilities, mining companies, manufacturers, the transportation industry, agriculture, Indian tribes, local governments, environmental groups and the public.

- Arizona will continue to purchase only low-emission vehicles, with a goal to have the entire state fleet converted by January 2012.

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