

The good news from the states

The US delegation is unlikely to move the climate change debate forward in Nairobi. But, in state capitals across the Union, efforts to tackle greenhouse gas emissions are well under way. **Michael Northrop** and **David Sassoon** report

The delegation from the unrepentant monolith will lumber to this year's climate meetings – this time held in Nairobi – with a familiar obstructive stance, predictably isolated and uncooperative. The biggest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the world will again refuse the opportunity to lead by example.

Nevertheless, there's an important secret about America's international posture on global warming that the rest of the world should know: it's an unrepresentative pretense that hides the action being taken by America's individual states. The truth is there's good news on climate solutions emanating from the states that offers cause for optimism.

Though they are not nations unto themselves, US states have a greater impact on global warming than most countries on the planet. Among the top 75 emitters of global warming pollutants, 34 are US states.

California has the world's fifth largest economy. It ranks twelfth, just behind France and just ahead of Australia, on the list of the world's top GHG emitters. A neighbouring state – Arizona – is the sixth largest in area and has the fastest growth rate of all the states within the mighty nation. It is no small distinction, even though it ranks 38th among the world's top emitters of greenhouse gases.

Neither of these states – not the one with the largest single economy nationwide, nor the one that is the fastest growing – is sending an official delegation of its own to Nairobi to participate in the global climate negotiations. Both, however, are in the vanguard of climate action bubbling up from dozens of states. They have taken their place – albeit without proper diplomatic protocol – among the community of nations by providing leadership in the effort to reduce global

GHG emissions, and for the role they are playing in leading the US toward a desperately needed national policy.

That explains why UK Prime Minister Tony Blair bypassed Washington and went to California to meet Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in July. It was the best way for him to help advance the ball on climate action in the US. They met to collaborate on solutions to global warming, a telling moment that saw the signing of an agreement between the head of a national government and the head of a US state government. "California will not wait for our federal government to take strong action on global warming," the governor said as he committed his state to be a world leader on the issue.

Just two months later, Schwarzenegger signed a sweeping climate action bill into law that commits the state to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. These targets, now made mandatory by force of law, are the most aggressive of any nation state in the world.¹

The legislation builds upon the



Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano: a bold move on climate

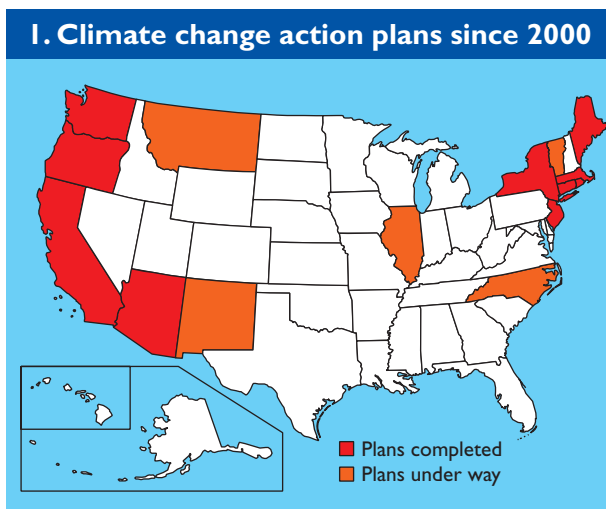
work of California's Climate Action Team, which last April released a report that demonstrated substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions were achievable and would be beneficial to the state economy. A study by the University of California at Berkeley projects that meeting the law's emissions targets could add \$60 billion–74 billion to the gross state product (GSP) and create up to 89,000 jobs.²

The signing of AB 32, California's global warming legislation, earned front-page headlines across the country. The landmark measure is the first economy-wide cap on global warming emissions to be attempted by any state, and many hailed it as a national turning point.

The *New York Times* said California "is making a huge bet: that it can reduce emissions without wrecking its economy, and therefore inspire other states – and countries – to follow its example on slowing climate change". The *Washington Post* said California's move "marks a new stage in the accelerating drive for a more aggressive national response to global warming".

About a week after legislators in California came to bipartisan agreement on the provisions of AB 32, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano released a climate action plan for her state.³ The plan didn't get as much national attention, but its message was as compelling as the news from California.

Arizona expects its population to



1 See <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?/press-release/4111>

2 See <http://calclimate.berkeley.edu/>

more than double within the next 30 years. Between 1990 and 2005, its GHG emissions grew by a whopping 56%. If nothing is done, emissions are expected to rise 147% above 1990 levels over the next 15 years. It is the largest projected percentage increase of any state. Is it really possible to substantially reduce emissions in America's fastest-growing economy without slowing it to an undesirable crawl? The state's climate action plan had a surprisingly positive answer.

If fully implemented, it will cut Arizona's GHG emissions almost in half by 2020 and provide \$5.5 billion in net savings to its economy. Pursuing similar policies in subsequent decades could cut the state's emissions to half of what they were in 2000 by 2050 (see Figure 2). The plan would also cut gas and diesel consumption by 30%, save 34,000 gigawatt hours of electricity – 20% of forecast consumption – and create an estimated 286,000 jobs from shifts to new energy sources.

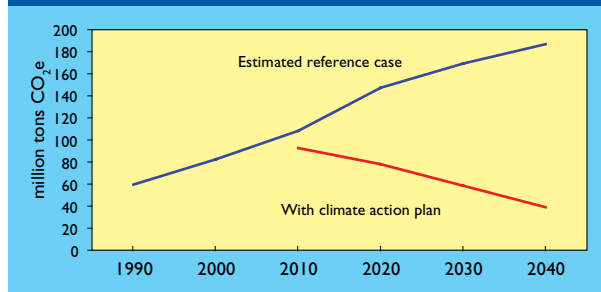
The Arizona plan, like California's legislation, is not built around a single big fix. It is a carefully constructed portfolio of 49 measures that, in aggregate, pull emissions levels downward. Some of the measures generate savings; some require investment. On balance, the savings outweigh the investments (see Figure 3), and the plan enables the state to substantially reduce its carbon footprint without harm to its growth rate or economic health.

Many relatively straightforward measures will enable Arizona to cut emissions and save money. For example, new state appliance efficiency standards alone will reduce electricity consumption by nearly 9GWh, save nearly \$500 million and reduce GHG emissions by 7 million tons (Mt); new tailpipe emission standards – the same as those adopted in California – would save Arizona nearly \$3 billion in fuel efficiency gains and cut GHG emissions by over 32Mt over the next 15 years.

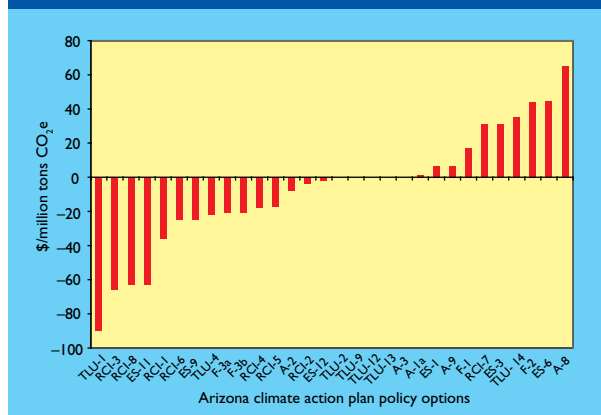
The state's high growth rate, it turns out, is key to the efficacy of proposed climate actions. It means Arizona can "build it right" the first time rather than retrofit, advance a cleaner and more efficient brand of economic growth on a clean slate, and show the way to many other states similarly poised for quick growth.

Arizona's projected emissions reductions are the most dramatic set out in any US state climate plan, and their magnitude is consistent with reductions recommended by the scientific community for avoiding dangerous interference with the earth's climate. The governor and the state legislature are now working on a package

2. Arizona's GHG emissions: with and without climate action plan



3. Impact of Arizona climate action plan policy options, 2007–20



The truth is there's good news on climate solutions emanating from America's states that offers cause for optimism

of enabling legislation, regulatory fixes and executive orders to implement the climate plan.

California and Arizona are not alone among the states in taking action. Ten US states have completed climate action plans and have adopted a portfolio of far-reaching policies; five are formally developing climate action plans; and 12 others are commencing GHG inventories, forecasts and preliminary assessments as a potential prelude to action.

In addition to this are the states that have taken steps to reduce emissions on an *ad hoc* basis. Twenty-two states have made commitments to reaching renewable energy targets by adopting Renewable Portfolio Standards.⁴ Ten states have followed California's lead and have committed to the Pavely standards for reducing greenhouse gases from tailpipes.⁵ Dozens of others have entered into regional collaborations to work together to reduce emissions.⁶ One catalogue of state actions lists 250 individual measures taken to reduce

emissions.⁷ All of this activity means climate action is touching virtually every one of the 50 US states through a variety of policy and planning mechanisms, initiatives and legislation that are growing in force and momentum.

Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, who serves as chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, made a surprising admission about climate change legislation at a press conference earlier this year. "Frankly, I don't know how to write it," he said, "and I don't think anybody does." Washington law-makers don't yet sufficiently realise that there is a growing cadre of experts in many states across the country who do know how to develop climate legislation.

"States in the US have always played a key role in providing solutions to difficult issues and now, many governors have developed strong and pragmatic climate action programmes," said Tom Peterson, executive director of the Center for Climate Strategies (CCS). "Washington law-makers would be wise to build upon their hard work and the vast consensus they have created."

Peterson's organisation is a non-profit, non-partisan group that provides technical assistance to help states tackle climate change. His team – whose members have been involved in virtually every state climate planning process in the US since 2000 – works directly with governors and their staff to develop a comprehensive set of effective policies.⁸ The Arizona plan is the most recent product of a CCS collaboration.

Key to the success of the CCS model of climate planning is the participatory consensus-building that lies at the heart of the process. CCS helps states work through the conflicts that arise when climate and energy issues are discussed, and to reach agreement.

"The policies which emerge from our work with state officials and stakeholders create economic as well as environmental victories. They are politically desirable and often quickly implemented," Peterson said. "When you get everyone around a table and focus on real solutions, success follows because so many good options exist, and so many are already working somewhere."

Michael Northrop directs sustainable development grant-making at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York. David Sassoon is founder of Science First Communications, New York. E-mails: mnorthrop@rbf.org; sassoon@worldnet.att.net

3 See www.azclimatechange.us/

4 See www.eere.energy.gov/states/maps/renewable_portfolio_states.cfm

5 See www.pbs.org/now/science/caautoemissions2.html

6 See the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (www.rggi.org); the Western Regional Air Partnership (www.wrappair.org); the Western Governors Association (www.westgov.org); and New England Governors'/Eastern Canadian Premiers' Agreement of 2001 (www.negc.org/premiers.html)

7 See www.mtclimatechange.us/ewebeditpro/items/O127F8904.pdf

8 See www.climatestrategies.us