

✘ The announcement of the deal on auto emissions was roundly hailed as a remarkable achievement of the Obama Administration. There is no arguing with the notion that it was dramatic, both in terms of the bargaining process and the outcome. The [Los Angeles Times](#) today provided a behind-the-scenes view of the months-long negotiations, including everything from last minute deal-breakers to hushed cell phone calls at a baseball game. Likewise, the visual of the President surrounded by automakers, auto workers and environmentalists was truly striking.

And, as one might expect, everyone was vying for their chunk of the credit. [The President noted](#) that “In the past, an agreement such as this would have been considered impossible. It represents not only a change in policy in Washington but the harbinger of a change in the way business is done in Washington.” Fair enough, after all he certainly was the driving force here. And of course, California officials are rightfully lining up to claim their piece of the pie. [Governor Schwarzenegger bragged](#), ““California’s relentless push for greenhouse gas reductions from automobiles is paying off not just for our state, but for all Americans, for our environment, for automakers and our economy. . . . Today, we’re seeing what happens when California leads on energy and the environment and doesn’t waiver, doesn’t get bogged down, doesn’t let obstacles get in the way.”

But the Bush Administration? Really? Well, [Jeffrey Holmstead, former EPA assistant administrator for air and radiation during the Bush Administration, boasted](#), ““It looks like the Obama administration is agreeing with the Bush administration that there needs to be a national standard and that it doesn’t make any sense to have multiple state standards.” Of course the major difference is that the Bush Administration wasn’t particularly interested in either a state or federal standard. But perhaps it isn’t simply hubris on Holmstead’s part. Obama and his staff took advantage of a unique situation, a perfect storm of sorts: a tidal wave of support for action on climate change, an economically battered auto industry dependant on the feds for handouts, and a public hungry for change. To a great degree, this situation was fueled by a range of Bush Administration domestic and international policies: the lack of federal action on climate change, refusal to allow state action on auto emissions, and minimal regulation and oversight of the securities and banking industries to name a few.