



Former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger shakes hands with Gov. Jerry Brown as they celebrate the 10th anniversary of AB 32. (Sacramento Bee)

In stark contrast to a dysfunctional national government and an utterly dispiriting presidential campaign, Sacramento, California was today the site of an inspirational, bipartisan celebration. Current California Governor Jerry Brown, a Democrat, and his predecessor, Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, joined past and present state legislative leaders to commemorate the 10th anniversary of California's landmark Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, better known as AB 32.

Most Legal Planet readers know by now that AB 32 committed the State of California to roll back its aggregate greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020—a GHG reduction goal that was the world's most ambitious a decade ago. At the time, many observers predicted that AB 32's GHG reduction goals could not be achieved by the statutory deadline, would cripple California's economy, or both.

Neither prediction has proven true. California is on track to meet its AB 32-mandated GHG emission reduction goals *before* the 2020 deadline. And California's economy is booming at the same time the state pursues ever more ambitious environmental goals. (More about that in a moment.)

Governors Brown and Schwarzenegger were clearly the stars of today's celebration, and both delivered powerful remarks celebrating California's past environmental leadership while underscoring the need for California to do even more on the climate change front in

the future. But also spotlighted at today's event were two other public figures whose pioneering work over the past decade and a half has proved instrumental in achieving California's climate change goals.

The first is State Senator Fran Pavley, who is completing a distinguished 15-year career as California's most influential environmental legislator over that period. Today's celebration served as a victory lap of sorts for Pavley, who was the lead author of AB 32 in 2006. But even before then, as a junior Assembly member in 2002, Pavley authored AB 1493, which committed the state to adopting the world's first GHG emission limits for automobiles. (Those emission limits, bitterly and unsuccessfully challenged in court by the auto industry, were the model for federal automobile emission control limits adopted by the Obama Administration in 2009.) And this year, in her final term as a state Senator, Pavley authored—and Governor Brown signed—SB 32, new legislation that “doubles down” on AB 32 by committing California to a 40% aggregate GHG emission reduction (compared to 1990 levels) by 2030.

The other key celebrant and honoree at today's event was California Air Resources Board Chair Mary Nichols. It fell to Nichols and CARB to translate AB 32's ambitious but vaguely-stated GHG emission reduction mandate into a multifaceted, understandable and effective regulatory strategy. Over the past decade they have accomplished that daunting task magnificently. Years from now, I predict that political scientists and government efficiency experts will point to CARB's AB 32 implementation as a model of regulatory effectiveness.

Governors Schwarzenegger and Brown, along with other speakers, repeatedly “called out” national political leaders to take a page from California's climate change playbook and replicate California's GHG mitigation efforts at the federal level. But that would require bipartisan political leadership and cooperation that are sadly lacking in present-day Washington.

And what about the claim of some climate change naysayers that AB 32 and California's other pioneering climate change legislation would devastate California's economy? Speakers at today's Sacramento event rebutted that charge with two key statistics:

- According to the Washington Post, California has just surpassed the United Kingdom as the world's fifth largest economy; and
- Former Governor Schwarzenegger gleefully noted in his remarks that in 2015, the national GDP grew by 2%, while California's expanded by a remarkable 4.2%.

It's days like these that make me proud to be a Californian.