Western governors join to fight global warming
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(09-22) 17:40 PDT LOS ANGELES (AP) --

The governors of California, Washington and Oregon, accusing the Bush administration of "foot-dragging" in the fight against global warming, announced Monday they plan to develop a joint strategy to reduce pollution.

California Gov. Gray Davis and Washington Gov. Gary Locke, joined by environmental activists, unveiled the pact at a state park offering smog-shrouded views of Los Angeles. Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who was unable to attend, endorsed the plan in a statement.

The three Democrats said they would work to check global warming through coordinated actions that include purchasing fuel-efficient vehicles, developing renewable sources of energy and creating standardized methods to account for emissions.

Davis said the agreement was necessary because President Bush refused to act more aggressively to cut emissions.

"Unfortunately the Bush administration is still in denial on global warming. They have their head in the Texas sand, they're foot-dragging. They refuse to believe it's a problem," Davis said. "My message today is if Washington, D.C., will not lead, then the West Coast of the United States will lead on global warming."

Locke, who said the three states account for nearly 2 percent of global emissions, warned that climate change could wreak havoc on natural habitat by melting snowpacks and sparking forest fires.

"Other countries are paying attention and acting," Locke said. "The current administration is paying only lip service and doing little to address global warming."

Dana Perino, a spokeswoman for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, dismissed such criticism. She cited the administration's proposals to give tax incentives to consumers who use alternative energy and buy hybrid vehicles, along with a plan that calls for the amount of greenhouse gases released as a percentage of economic growth to be reduced by 18 percent by 2012.

"The facts surpass political rhetoric. We have an aggressive and comprehensive global climate change set of initiatives that go further and deeper than his proposals today," Perino said.

The three states hope to:

* Use their purchasing power to obtain fuel-efficient vehicles.
* Reduce diesel fuel emissions from ships and trucks, including by creating a network of emission-free truck stops along Interstate 5 from Mexico to Canada.

* Promote more renewable energy.

* Develop uniform efficiency standards.

* Work on better measurement and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

The action was welcomed by environmentalists, who have been critical of the Bush administration's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol to slash emissions and what they view as a willingness to allow companies to take only voluntary measures.

"This plan is the kind of leadership we need. And we're hoping it will produce real results that will demonstrate that it's possible to take steps to begin the long fight to prevent global warming," said David G. Hawkins, director of the National Resources Defense Council Climate Center.

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