

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

*A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy*

---

December 27, 2010

---

President's and Vice President's Calls to Iraqi PM al-Maliki.....	1
California Climate Law Is Magnet for Clean Energy Projects .....	1
Kennedy Center Honors Artists Who Have "the Power to Inspire".....	2

## President's and Vice President's Calls to Iraqi PM al-Maliki

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
December 21, 2010

Readout of the President and Vice President's calls to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki

The President and Vice President each spoke to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki today to congratulate him on the formation of an inclusive government of national partnership that reflects the results of the national election. The President underscored U.S. support for a long-term partnership with Iraq and his desire to strengthen cooperation with the Iraqi government and people in a range of fields according to the bilateral Strategic Framework Agreement. The Vice President also extended his congratulations to Iraqiyya leader Dr. Ayad Allawi. The White House applauds the cooperation among Iraqi leaders which was instrumental in today's success.

## California Climate Law Is Magnet for Clean Energy Projects

By Karin Rives  
Staff Writer

Washington — With national climate legislation stalled in the U.S. Congress, environmental advocates are turning their attention to the country's more action-oriented states.

Two states are now imposing their own caps on greenhouse gas emissions, while a number of others have set renewable energy standards for power producers. This is raising hopes that the United States may soon be able to rein in greenhouse gases in a significant way.

All eyes are on California, the world's eighth-largest economy, where the country's most comprehensive climate legislation will go into effect in January.

The state's Global Warming Solutions Act includes a series of measures aimed at reducing emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. One of them is a mandatory cap-and-trade system approved December 16 that sets the stage for the United States' first economy-wide carbon market to open in January 2012.

California voters had the opportunity to halt the implementation of the new law in the November elections, but chose to uphold it.

"This is what makes us the leader," California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said the day state environmental regulators adopted the cap-and-trade system, a policy he had initiated and fought for. "This is not just about global climate change ... but it's also about health. It is about the 19,000 people [who] die every year because of pollution. We can do better than that."

California's action also blows new life into the Western Climate Initiative (WCI), a coalition of western U.S. states and Canadian provinces seeking to set up a regional carbon market. WCI's goal is to reduce emissions 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.

California's participation was seen by program participants and observers as pivotal to the survival of the WCI, which will become the second-largest carbon market in the world after the European Union's Emissions Trading System.

"These reductions will be significant, not only in terms of the United States, but for the world," said Andrew Light, a senior fellow and climate expert at the Center for American Progress, a Washington think tank.

On December 6, New Mexico, another WCI member, approved a carbon cap for power companies and other industries that emit greenhouse gases. The Southwestern state plans to reduce emissions by 3 percent annually starting in 2013, with the goal of cutting emissions 25 percent below 1990 levels.

Steeper reductions could be imposed after a review three years into the process, said John Fogarty, president of New Energy Economy, a New Mexico nonprofit organization that helped push through the new rules.

"We're a major oil-, gas- and coal-producing state. Having a state that is so heavily invested in fossil fuels showing that it's important to also develop clean energy sources, I think, can be a model for the country," he said.

## WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR PROJECT

Investors are taking notice of the emerging carbon markets and clean energy policies out West.

NRG Energy, a New Jersey-based power company, recently announced it will buy a planned 290-megawatt photovoltaic solar energy farm in Arizona that will sell electricity to a California electric utility that must meet stringent renewable energy goals under California's new climate law. All electricity sold in California is regulated by the new law, even if it's produced elsewhere.

The Agua Caliente project is expected to be the world's largest solar project of its kind when it comes online in

2014.

Over the last few months, NRG has committed nearly \$1.6 billion toward Southwestern solar power projects that come in addition to the company's large investments in wind, biomass, nuclear and carbon-capture initiatives in recent years. It's no coincidence that several of the large solar projects were initiated with California in mind.

"California's renewable portfolio standard is a very powerful magnet," said Steve Corneli, senior vice president of market and climate policy for NRG. It "allows a market mechanism to evolve that will help pay for the more expensive, cleaner energy projects. Equally important is that it's created the opportunity to get longer-term contracts [with California power companies]. It takes the risk out of these projects."

#### AN UNCERTAIN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

A cap-and-trade scheme gives companies financial incentives to reduce emissions while requiring companies to pay for emissions above a defined limit. Credits given for reductions can be traded and generate profits on the carbon market.

A common argument in favor of legally binding renewable energy standards and emissions caps has been that industry needs clear policy signals to invest in clean energy technologies. At the same time, large power producers such as NRG Energy must invest today in generating stations that will serve their customers — and shareholders — over the next several decades.

So NRG is taking advantage of federal loan guarantees and cash grants provided for clean energy projects because it bets that this is where the future lies.

"We are clearly in a period of real uncertainty of what regulation will look like, when it will happen, and where it will come from," Corneli said. "But we think that it's only a matter of time. As we look ahead, whether it's this year or in 10 years, we see various kinds of carbon constraints as very likely. That's why we want to invest in low- or zero-carbon projects."

#### **Kennedy Center Honors Artists Who Have "the Power to Inspire"**

By Michael Bandler  
Staff Writer

Washington — Among all the awards bestowed on musicians, actors, playwrights and others in the world of entertainment, the Kennedy Center Honors ceremony is the only American tribute that brings lifetime achievement in all the performing arts together, at one

time and in one place.

A Kennedy Center Honor recognizes lifetime accomplishment by American artists and those from other nations who have achieved prominence in the United States. This year one of the recipients was British musician Paul McCartney, the onetime Beatle who continues to be an influential composer of pop music and symphonic works.

The center's 33rd annual honors celebration, held December 5 and to be aired on CBS Television on December 28, also saluted four Americans: composer and lyricist Jerry Herman, modern dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones, country singer/songwriter Merle Haggard, and actress, producer and television host Oprah Winfrey.

"The arts have always had the power to challenge and the power to inspire — to help us celebrate in times of joy and find hope in times of trouble," President Obama said during a White House reception for the honorees December 5. The honorees "aren't being recognized simply because of their careers. ... Instead, they're being honored for their unique ability to bring us closer together and to capture something larger about who we are — not just as Americans, but as human beings."

A dinner for the honorees was hosted at the State Department by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton the evening before the Kennedy Center's annual gala tribute.

#### THE HONOREES

Herman, winner of two Tony awards, is best known for composing the scores for the Broadway musicals *Mame*, *Hello, Dolly!* and *La Cage aux Folles*. Reflecting a golden age of musical theater, Herman's work embraces the sunnier side of life. And yet, he invariably has been aware of the moment. In transposing the French film farce *La Cage aux Folles* to the stage in 1983, Herman included issues of equality and sexuality just as those issues had begun to be debated in the United States. The show's revival today on Broadway arrived as elements of the debate continue.

Jones, a powerful dancer and creator of more than 150 pieces, has taken his free-flowing, kinetic and sometimes pointedly political work to more than two dozen countries. Born in Florida, one of a dozen children, he experienced life in the fields where his parents toiled as migrant workers. Those early years and the memory of his collaborator and partner, Arnie Zane, who died at age 39 from AIDS complications, have influenced Jones' work and kept it on the cutting edge of dance. He has won two Tony awards, Broadway's highest honor, and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, the so-called "genius" grant, for his choreography on Broadway. One of his

Tony awards was for *Fela!*, which is based on the life of Nigerian composer and activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti.

Haggard, also a child of impoverished migrant workers, has composed more than 600 recorded songs, including more than three dozen that topped national country music charts. Haggard has won two performing Grammys, the award for outstanding achievement in the music industry, and a Grammy Hall of Fame Award. Famous for his vocal intonation, the musical properties and phrasings of his performance, he has been called a poet of the common man. His plain-spoken songs – “one of the greatest repertoires in all of American music,” according to *Rolling Stone* magazine – have been embraced by hundreds of artists.

In the words of celebrated singer/songwriter Bob Dylan, Haggard “has always been as deep as it gets – totally himself. Herculean.”

Along with his fellow Beatles, Paul McCartney changed the face of contemporary music; the sounds, performance styles and sensibilities of the group permeated popular culture worldwide. He later formed the group Paul McCartney & Wings, which lasted until 1981, and he continues to perform around the world. McCartney has more recently turned his attention to writing poetry and creating symphonic poems, oratorios and compositions for solo instruments, without forsaking his rock ‘n’ roll origins. “One of the most influential and doubtless the most successful composer of our time, Paul McCartney has left an indelible mark in the vast and varied landscape that is American music,” says his Kennedy Center biography. McCartney also was honored in June when the Library of Congress presented him with the Gershwin Prize.

Oprah Winfrey’s roots are in rural Mississippi, where she overcame a tough childhood to become one of America’s most successful entertainers as well as a movie and television producer. She starred in Steven Spielberg’s adaptation of Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* and in other films. On her TV talk show and in the magazine she founded, Winfrey has promoted reading, child protection and philanthropy at home and overseas. Within and outside the performing arts, Winfrey, in Obama’s words, “has shown millions of people around the world – people she probably will never meet – what it means to believe in ‘the dream of your own life.’”

Of the five honorees, Obama said, “Their lives and their stories ... are as diverse as any you can imagine. Yet in their own way, each of these honorees helps us understand the human experience.”

“This evening is not about honoring American artists, so much as it is about honoring artists who have [helped] to

shape America,” Clinton said. “And it is an important distinction ... because America has always been influenced by the experiences and contributions of other cultures.”

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)