

# China rolls out green carpet for California on climate

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China is working to clear up a badly polluted environment and has thrown its weight behind efforts to combat climate change. Beijing is happy to talk to US states that disagree with President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Accord

China treated a US state governor to a red carpet reception this week, while President Donald Trump's energy chief received a low-key greeting, a signal that Beijing is ready to go around the White House in

the battle against climate change.

Since Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris climate deal, China has repeatedly vowed to uphold the accord and work with American [states](#) that share its determination.

Giving a warm welcome to California Governor Jerry Brown, an opposition Democrat and self-described "envoy for humanity", while cold shouldering US Energy Secretary Rick Perry signalled Beijing was happy to bypass Washington to make that happen.

"I think the message is that irrespective of the decision of Donald Trump, China is willing to work with individual states and cities in the United States," said Willy Lam, an expert on politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

## **'Losing ground'**

Brown and Perry arrived in Beijing for a ministerial-level clean [energy](#) meeting just days after Trump's shock announcement.

While Perry maintained a relatively low profile during his visit, Brown, who had described Trump's move as "insane", went on a public relations offensive as he sought to fill the vacuum left by the US leader in the [climate change](#) fight.



California Governor Jerry Brown was treated to a red carpet welcome in Beijing, including meeting with President Xi Jinping, as China looks to forge relationships with US states on climate change

"We are losing ground. We are not moving at the pace needed to prevent catastrophe," Brown warned Thursday on the sidelines of the gathering.

Brown used several public appearances in Beijing to drum up Chinese support for California's aggressive efforts to curb climate-warming carbon emissions—including face-to-face talks with Xi in the Great Hall of the People, a venue normally reserved for meetings with visiting heads of state.

His efforts yielded results.

By the end of a week-long tour Brown said he had secured several

preliminary agreements relating to clean energy and the establishment of a China-California climate institute at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

China is a "major economic engine that is investing in the low-carbon economy and California is doing things that are similar, on a smaller level of course," Brown told AFP.

Chinese officials have made it clear they want to work with the American state—and beyond.



California has forged ahead with environmental regulations that have helped clear up once-polluted skies over cities like Los Angeles

California has "a lot of experience that is beneficial to the rest of us", Xie Zhenhua, China's top climate negotiator, told a forum attended by Brown on Thursday.

"We will not only continue to strengthen cooperation with California, but also strengthen concrete cooperation with other US states, cities, enterprises and scientific research institutions in fields including clean energy."

## **Perry snubbed?**

Trump's backsliding on the Paris deal is viewed as handing China the mantle in the battle against global warming—an opportunity Beijing welcomes as it seeks to become a world leader on everything from globalisation to the environment.

But it also fits with China's domestic political agenda of being seen to do more to clean up its polluted air and rivers and find new ways of spurring economic growth.

Perry called for Sino-US cooperation on clean energy, noting America was still keen to work with China despite Trump's decision to exit the global climate agreement.



While California Governor Jerry Brown was granted an audience with Chinese President Xi Jinping, US Energy Secretary Rick Perry met Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli—China's number seven

"We have extraordinary opportunities to be partners to work on clean energy issues," said Perry, who was granted a meeting with China's number seven, Zhang Gaoli, in the central leadership compound.

Perry told reporters Friday he had received a "good" reception from Chinese leaders and no one had told him "America needs to get back into the Paris Accord".

"Now, did they think it? I don't know," Perry said.

But he added: "America is not stepping back from its role as a leader in [clean energy](#), emission reduction—both of those are successes of the

trip."

While Perry's meeting with Zhang could be interpreted as a diplomatic snub to the US official, analysts said it may also mean that China has not given up on Washington.

"It's probably trying to send some signal that China is still trying to cooperate," said Tom Rafferty, China regional manager for the Economist Intelligence Unit.

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