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Mass. joins regional emissions pact

By STEVE LeBLANC

BOSTON

Gov. Deval Patrick, making good on a campaign pledge, signed an agreement Thursday committing Massachusetts to the nation's first multistate program to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Patrick also announced a new program intended to create energy savings for households and industry by auctioning off so-called "emission allowances" that electricity generators will need for each ton of carbon dioxide they emit under the pact.

"Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time," Patrick said. "On this day, we want everyone to know that Massachusetts will not stand on the sidelines."

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is designed to curb carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by 10 percent by 2019. It has already been signed by governors from Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Vermont.

Former Gov. Mitt Romney opted out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in 2005, saying it could drive up energy costs for consumers.

Patrick acknowledged that joining the pact could drive up electricity bills by \$3 to \$16 on the average household with an annual energy bill of \$950.

"What's most important is that we be careful not to use short-term factors to defeat long-term objectives," he said.

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