In what might well be the environmental policy equivalent of “the shot heard ’round the world,” President Trump’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord has set off a whirlwind of speculation as to the fate of climate change regulations in California and the nation. But, as a practical matter, we are unlikely to see any material changes to environmental rules and laws at any level — state, regional or local here in California.

In fact, Gov. Jerry Brown already has publicly stated that California will continue to aggressively lead the world in climate change policy.

As the state’s leading energy producers, California’s oil-and-gas industry will continue to work to meet the state’s commitment to climate change goals.

Since the Legislature’s passage and then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s signature on the California Global Warming Solutions Act, Assembly Bill 32 in 2006, California has set out on an unprecedented path toward a low-carbon future. Members of the
Western States Petroleum Association have worked closely with regulators, elected leaders and the communities in which we operate to help realize that vision but with a keen eye toward minimizing costs to the businesses, consumers and communities.

This work has not been without challenges, but in the end, our industry and our employees have proudly continued to safely produce, refine and market the fuels that power our state’s economy all while working to lower greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality in California. This work has been accomplished through innovation, collaboration and significant investment in the facilities, technology and infrastructure required to operate in the most stringent regulatory environment in the world.

As we look at the policies and programs needed to meet our climate change goals, it’s important to acknowledge that combatting climate change is not without cost. California consumers and businesses are frequently reminded of these effects as they deal with energy prices that are among the nation’s highest. If there’s an unintended consequence of the Golden State’s commitment to aggressive climate change policies, it may be that it puts our businesses at a competitive disadvantage and leaves our consumers and communities to bear higher energy costs. That’s why it is important that the Legislature heed the governor’s call and reauthorize improved market-based programs such as the state’s cap-and-trade auctions this year.

Cap-and-trade is acknowledged as an environmentally effective and economically efficient tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; it must remain the keystone program for meeting our climate-change goals.

No region, state or nation in the world produces cleaner fuels and energy than we do in California, and whatever may be discussed outside our state, our industry is committed to maintaining that status.

*Catherine Reheis-Boyd is president of the Western States Petroleum Association.*