

Wolf signs Real ID law, expects new licenses in 2019

Michael Bryant

[Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

HARRISBURG – Gov. Wolf on Friday signed legislation that brings Pennsylvania into compliance with the 2005 Real ID law enacted following the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

That law requires driver's licenses and ID cards to have security enhancements and to be issued to people who prove they are legally in the United States. That means Pennsylvania drivers or ID card holders will eventually have to obtain the more secure certificates to board commercial airliners or enter certain federal facilities.

Wolf signed the Pennsylvania Real ID Compliance Act at a ceremony at Harrisburg International Airport. The law, which takes effect in 90 days, allows PennDot to create an optional driver's license or state ID that will match the Real ID requirements to access airports, military bases, federal courthouses and other facilities in 2018 and beyond.

The legislation, however, doesn't require residents to obtain a driver's license or ID that meets federal Real ID standards. People without Real ID will still be able to use a passport to board commercial airliners or enter certain federal facilities.

Wolf's office said Pennsylvania Real ID should be available in early 2019. In the meantime, existing state IDs or passports will work at airports and federal facilities.

PennDot does not have a cost estimate, but making the current driver's license compliant will require a mark, or symbol, on the license as well as upgrades to back-office operations and

systems, said PennDot spokesman Rich Fitzpatrick. The law also requires drivers to present documentation, such as a birth certificate and Social Security card, the first time they get an ID-compliant license.

The federal Real ID Act stemmed from a recommendation by the 9/11 Commission to help curb the use of fake identification by terrorists by setting minimum standards all states should follow when issuing ID cards such as driver's licenses. Among the things the act required that licenses and IDs have are: full legal name; features that prevent tampering, counterfeiting, or duplication; and an RFID chip or machine readable technology that can be used to pull up biographical or biometric data.

Before Friday, Pennsylvania was the largest state that has not complied with the law, passed by Congress after the 2001 terror attacks.

Trump 'evolving' on climate action, pressured by Europeans

[FOX News](#)

TAORMINA, Italy – Forceful face-to-face talks this week with fellow world leaders left President [Donald Trump](#) “more knowledgeable” and with “evolving” views about the global climate accord he’s threatened to abandon, a top [White House](#) official said Friday. Trump also was impressed by their arguments about how crucial U.S. leadership is in supporting international efforts.

The president's new apparent openness to staying in the landmark [Paris](#) climate pact came amid a determined pressure campaign by European leaders. During Friday's gathering of the Group of 7 wealthy democracies – as well as at earlier stops on Trump's first international trip – leaders have implored him to stick with the 2015 accord aimed at reducing carbon emissions and slowing potentially disastrous global warming.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the G-7 leaders “put forward very many arguments” for the U.S. sticking with the agreement. And by Friday evening, White House economic adviser Gary Cohn said Trump's views were indeed “evolving.”

“He feels much more knowledgeable on the topic today,” Cohn said. “He came here to learn, he came here to get smarter.”

While those comments were remarkable given Trump's fierce criticism of the Paris deal as a candidate, they were also in keeping with his emerging pattern as president. A novice in international affairs, Trump has been surprisingly candid about the impact his conversations with world leaders have had in shaping his views on numerous issues.

He backed away from his tough campaign talk about trade with China after a summit with [President Xi](#) Jinping. And he abandoned his criticism of [Saudi Arabia's](#) human rights record following his warm welcome in the desert kingdom this week.

On Friday, G-7 leaders appeared to take a page out of the playbook other countries have followed, emphasizing America's unrivaled influence on the world stage. Cohn told reporters that Trump was struck by “how important it is for the [United States](#) to show leadership” and how even in massive international agreements, there's “a big gap when you take the biggest economy out.”

White House National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster quickly jumped in to assert that Trump would make his decisions based

“on what’s best for the American people,” hewing to the “America First” policy that energized the president’s supporters during last year’s election campaign.

Nearly 200 countries are part of the Paris accord, and each sets its own emissions targets, which are not legally binding. The U.S. has pledged to reduce its annual greenhouse gas emissions in 2025 by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels, which would be a reduction of about 1.6 billion tons of annual emissions.

The Trump administration has argued that the U.S. standards are tougher than those set by China, India and others, and therefore have put American businesses at a disadvantage.

After more than a week abroad, Trump will close his international trip Saturday with additional G-7 meetings and an address to U.S. troops at a nearby air base. Unlike many of the leaders, he does not plan a news conference, meaning he’ll end his trip without a formal question-and-answer session with journalists that could have included queries about the investigation back home into contacts between Russia and his election campaign.

The G-7 marked Trump’s final stop on a grueling nine-day trip through the [Middle East](#) and Europe. While the president was warmly received in Saudi Arabia and Israel, his reception in Europe was been more tepid given his campaign criticisms of NATO and the [European Union](#), the continent’s most powerful institutions.

In Brussels on Thursday, Trump excoriated fellow NATO leaders whose countries don’t meet the military alliance’s financial goals. The president also raised eyebrows with his comment in a private meeting that Germans are “bad” for having a large trade surplus with the U.S.

The gap between Trump and other G-7 leaders on climate underscored his isolation from Europe on some major issues.

The other G-7 nations – Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan – were weighing whether to issue a statement at the close of the summit reiterating their support for the Paris accord, even if the United States was not included.

The White House's slow decision-making on the issue led to the European leaders' persuasion campaign. Multiple White House meetings on the matter were delayed in recent weeks, and Trump advisers ultimately said he would not make a decision until after he returns to Washington this weekend.

In fact, discussions over the climate deal have sown divisions within the White House, splitting the nationalists and the globalists – including Cohn – who are competing for influence within Trump's administration. One potential compromise that's emerged involves staying in the climate accord but adjusting the U.S. emissions targets.

Even before arriving in the picturesque Sicilian coastal town of Taormina for the G-7 summit, Trump was facing pressure on Paris during his trip.

[French President](#) Emmanuel Macron spoke with him at length about the climate deal during a meeting Thursday in Brussels. The Vatican secretary of state, Pietro Parolin, made his own pro-Paris pitch to Trump and his advisers.

Pope Francis, who has framed climate change as an urgent moral crisis and blamed global warming on an unfair, fossil fuel-based industrial model that harms the poor, also appeared to be sending a message to Trump during their meeting. Among the three documents the pope presented as a gift was his 2015 encyclical on the need to protect the environment.

Five Things That Happened During Oklahoma's 2017 Legislative Session

Jacob McClelland & Nomin Ujiyediin

[KGOU](#)

Oklahoma's legislative session came to a close on Friday, as lawmakers passed a nearly \$7 billion budget.

[Republicans](#), who hold a large majority in both the House and Senate, needed [Democratic](#) support to pass revenue-raising measures, but negotiations crumbled over the weekend. To fill a \$878 million budget gap, lawmakers needed to pass several measures that could still be challenged in court.

Below are five big takeaways that happened during the session.

The budget passed and filled a \$878 million shortfall

Oklahoma faced a budget shortfall for the third consecutive year, a result of the energy downturn and income tax cuts, among other causes.

Lawmakers passed a budget on the final day of the session and found ways to raise new revenue and avoid large cuts to most state agencies.

Speaking on the House floor, budget chairwoman Rep. [Leslie Osborn](#), R-Mustang, closed debate by celebrating the accomplishment.

"One billion—with a 'B'—dollar hole, we fixed it. There's no perfect anything, but it's as good as it's going to get and it kept our core services harmless," Osborn said.

In order to fill the budget hole, legislators need to pass

several pieces of legislation to bring in more money. During the final days and hours of the session, they approved a measures to impose a \$1.50 fee per pack of cigarettes, increase the [gross production tax](#) on oil and gas production and increase the motor vehicle sales tax.

However, the measures may wind up in court. Oklahoma voters approved a constitutional amendment in the 1990s that requires a three-quarters vote threshold for revenue-raising bills. Additionally, they were approved during the final five days of the session, when bills that raise revenue are prohibited.

Even though Republicans hold large majorities in both chambers of the legislature, a large group of them vowed to not approve any tax increases. Therefore, House leader Rep. Charles McCall, R-Atoka, and Senate president pro tem Sen. [Mike Schulz](#), R-Altus, needed votes from Democrats to pass bills that would generate additional revenue. When negotiations with Democrats broke down over a rare weekend session, Republicans produced a plan to raise revenue through simple majority votes (see below).

Most state agencies will receive flat budgets or cuts between 4 and 5 percent of appropriations. [Kathryn McNutt writes in The Oklahoman](#) that even though a summary sheet of appropriations listed the State Regents for Higher Education to receive a cut of 4.5 percent, it will actually be closer to 6.1 percent, according to vice chancellor for budget and finance Amanda Palliotta.

“Our debt service obligations for the upcoming year total about \$62.6 million,” Paliotta said in a report to the [Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education](#).

“We had been told the [GA](#) (general appropriations) bill in this amount had shielded the \$62 million from cuts and that we would not have to absorb any additional cuts internally to make the payments. That is not the case.”

That means each of the 25 public colleges and universities and all the agency's operations and programs will be cut 6.1 percent, she said.

As in previous years, the budget was released in the final days of the legislative session and prompted complaints about transparency. This year's budget drew similar complaints. He was released to the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Budget on a Tuesday night, just before midnight, without a summary sheet.

Budget bill not online, so I uploaded it. This version w/ no summary, but here 'tis, Oklahoma » <https://t.co/Mm9V1XNcyQ> h/t [@EmilyVirginOK](#)

– Joe Wertz (@joewertz) [May 24, 2017](#)

Now we've been given a "revised" Fiscal Year 2018 state budget summary. So here's that. <pic.twitter.com/iWIKDtFkR9>

– Senator David Holt (@davidfholt) [May 24, 2017](#)

Cigarettes will cost more

In the last week of the session, lawmakers approved a \$1.50 cessation fee per pack of cigarettes.

Republican leaders chose to refer to the increase as a “fee” instead of a “tax” because they need three-quarters approval for revenue-raising measures. Democratic [House minority leader Rep. Scott Inman](#), D-Del City, offered to deliver his caucus's 26 votes in the House for a cigarette tax increase if Republicans would increase the gross production tax on oil and gas to 5 percent. When Republicans wouldn't meet Inman's requests, Democrats vowed not to support the cigarette tax.

But Republicans did have enough votes to secure a simple majority. They changed it from a "tax" to a cessation "fee," and it is estimated to bring in about \$258 million.

Questions remain about its constitutionality as a revenue-raising measure that did not pass with three-quarters of the vote. Furthermore, it passed during the final five days of the session, when revenue-raising measures are prohibited.

Republicans say the bill is designed to improve health outcomes. Sen. Greg Treat, R-Oklahoma City, argued the bill will reduce the state's smoking rate by deterring smoking and encouraging tobacco users to quit.

"Is the court going to uphold it? I think there's a solid argument to make there's enough policy in here that the intent of this bill is to stop people from smoking, to save lives," Treat said on the Senate floor.

Senate minority leader Sen. John Sparks, D-Norman, argued the bill could produce a "financial trainwreck" if courts rule against it because agencies will depend on the funding.

"When this fails in the courts, we will be in trouble. And some might say it might not fail. Well, I'm not sure that this is what we want to roll the dice on," Sparks said.

Gross production tax increase

Republicans passed a measure that will increase the gross production tax on oil and gas for certain wells. About 5,700 wells are currently taxed at a discounted rate of 1 percent instead of the standard rate of 7 percent for the first 48 months the wells are in production. The measure will increase the rate to 4 percent. It will generate nearly \$95 million. \$74 million will go into general revenue.

Republicans were able to pass the bill with a simple majority instead of the three-quarters vote necessary for most revenue-

raising measures. [StateImpact's Joe Wertz writes:](#)

By using this tactic, Republican lawmakers say gross production legislation isn't "revenue-raising," which means it can be approved with a simple majority rather than the three-quarters supermajority [constitutionally required](#) of measures that raise taxes. Hardline Republicans have opposed many revenue-raising efforts, which means supermajority approval is impossible without Democratic votes, but [negotiations between the parties stalled](#) on this and other measures.

Democrats were holding out for a larger increase. [They hoped for a 5 percent tax on all new wells during the first 36 months of production.](#) House minority leader Rep. Scott Inman refused to release his party's 26 votes in support of the cigarette tax increase without the 5 percent rate. Negotiations broke down, and Republican leaders had to pass the cigarette fee and the gross production tax increase with a simple majority.

The cigarette fee, gross production tax increase, and an increase in the state motor vehicle sales tax are open to questions about their constitutionality because they did not receive a three-quarters vote. They could also come under constitutional scrutiny for being considered during the final five days of the session, when revenue-raising measures are prohibited.

Long laterals

Another contentious issue in the state legislature was the drilling of horizontal oil and gas wells longer than a mile in non-shale rock formations—known as long lateral wells.

Horizontal wells can drill through shallow formations usually tapped by vertical wells. Horizontal drilling can possibly damage vertical wells or divert nearby oil, gas and minerals.

StateImpact Oklahoma's [Joe Wertz reported on the issue earlier this year](#):

Under a legal doctrine known as “rule of capture,” horizontal drillers are allowed to produce oil and gas even if their well or completion technology – such as fracking – pulls in crude or natural gas that might otherwise migrate to a vertical well.

States have adopted laws and rules to balance such capture – which incentivizes mineral owners to drill lots of wells and pump quickly – with other concerns, including the impact of drilling on land, water and wildlife. Such conservation laws leave less waste and reduce the likelihood that too much drilling in an oil field can reduce flow and change pressures, which can harm the entire pool of oil and gas and impede all owners’ ability to pump it out.

Smaller companies using vertical wells have complained that long lateral drilling could reduce the amount of oil and gas they produce by giving larger companies an advantage.

The legislature passed [Senate Bill 867](#) in the last week of the session, allowing long lateral drilling in non-shale rock formations—horizontal wells in shale or similar rock has been legal since 2012. [The Oklahoman reported](#) that the bill would bring \$19 million in tax revenue to the state.

Fallin signs REAL ID bill

The first piece of legislation to receive Gov. Mary Fallin’s signature was a bill that brought Oklahoma into compliance with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005. The new bill establishes two forms of identification in Oklahoma—one which is compliant with the REAL ID Act, and one which is not. Oklahomans can choose which type of identification they prefer when they get their driver’s license.

Without a REAL ID-compliant license, Oklahomans would need a passport or some other form of federal identification to board commercial aircraft, or to enter federal facilities like military bases.

Opponents were concerned about the collection of biometric data that could be shared with the federal government or other states.

Sen. David Holt, R-Oklahoma City, carried the bill on the Senate floor. He argued Oklahomans have been asking for a fix to the REAL ID issue. The state has been granted an extension to meet REAL ID compliance, but that extension expires in June.

“For several years now, I think most of our constituents have told us that they want an option that allows them to fly, to enter military bases and federal buildings,” Holt said.

Opponents, including Sen. Nathan Dahm, R-Broken Arrow, and Sen. Ralph Shortey, R-Oklahoma City, raised concerns about privacy and the additional \$5 cost per license.

“Under the provisions of this existing bill, everyone will have their biometric data collected, whether they are requesting the REAL ID compliant, or noncompliant,” Dahm said. “They will still have their biometric data not only collected, but then shared with other states and potentially, then, with other foreign governments.”

The Federal REAL ID Act was passed in 2005 as a counterterrorism measure, and sets standards for issuing identification.

Pleased to sign a measure that will allow Oklahomans to obtain a compliant REAL ID driver's license or ID card.
<https://t.co/Mxx0s4MvpD>

– Governor Mary Fallin (@GovMaryFallin) [March 2, 2017](#)

Fallin signed the bill on March 2, 2017. In a statement, Fallin said she appreciated the work of legislative leaders who crafted the bill and guided it to passage.

“Our citizens let us know they wanted action on this legislation so they wouldn’t be burdened with the cost and hassle of providing additional identification to gain entrance to federal buildings, military bases or federal courthouse. And they most certainly didn’t want to have to pay for additional identification, such as a passport, in order to board a commercial airliner beginning in January,” Fallin said.

[Melania Trump reveals she is Catholic: The First Lady shares her faith with the world after meeting the Pope as the first Catholic to live in White House since JFK](#)

[Daily Mail](#)

When

[Melania Trump](#) recited The Lord’s Prayer before a Melbourne, [Florida](#) presidential rally in February, the Internet went hog wild.

Now we know one reason why the first lady began with ‘Let us pray’ and ‘[Our Father who art in heaven](#)’ when she introduced

the president that evening: She's a practicing [Roman Catholic](#).

Her spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham confirmed that to DailyMail.com on Wednesday, hours after [Pope Francis](#) blessed a rosary for her at the Vatican.

The last Catholics to live in the White House were [John F. Kennedy](#) and his wife Jackie. Melania and her son Barron will move to [1600 Pennsylvania](#) Avenue over the summer.

Mrs. Trump did more than just show up for a [Papal audience](#).

She spent time in prayer at the Vatican-affiliated Bambino Gesù (Baby Jesus) Hospital, and laid flowers at the feet of a statue of the Madonna.

She also prayed in the hospital chapel and read to a young Greek boy in need of a donor heart – holding his hand in the Intensive Care Unit while camera shutters snapped.

The almighty may have heard her.

'Upon landing in Belgium, I learned a young boy and his family who had been waiting for a heart transplant was informed that the hospital has found a donor,' she said in a statement.

'I read a book and held hands with this special little one just a few hours ago, and now my own heart is filled with joy over this news.'

The first lady later tweeted about the development with the hashtags '#Blessings' and '#Faith.'

In another tweet, she sent 'blessings to all' after her Papal audience.

Mrs. Trump told Pope Francis at the Vatican that she was looking forward to going to the hospital 'for the bambinos.' She later called the visit 'very moving.'

'To spend time speaking to and coloring with children who have

such a positive spirit despite illness was an amazing gift,' she said.

'The time I spent with the little ones in the Intensive Care Unit is something I will never forget, and I will pray for each of them daily.'

It's unclear when Mrs. Trump became a Catholic. The president is a life-long Presbyterian, and they were married in a Florida Episcopal church.

Growing up as the daughter of a Communist Party member in rural Slovenia, her family maintained the outward appearances of being atheists, according to people in her childhood village of Sevnica who [spoke to DailyMail.com](#) in late 2015.

Accordingly, Melania and her sister were not baptized and did not make their First Holy Communion with other children their age.

It's still not clear when Mrs. Trump was baptized into the Catholic faith. Grisham did not immediately respond to a question about that detail.

But the Trumps have been in a reflective religious mood since arriving in Saudi Arabia last Saturday. That frame of mind persisted throughout their time in Israel.

The president addressed 55 world leaders from Arab and other Muslim-majority nations in Riyadh, imploring them to be part of 'a coalition of nations who share the aim of stamping out extremism and providing our children a hopeful future that does honor to God.'

In Jerusalem he visited the famed Western Wall, slipping a written prayer between the centuries-old stones as custom permits.

He 'marveled at the monument to God's presence and man's perseverance,' he said Tuesday in a speech at the Israel

Museum.

'I was humbled to place my hand upon the wall and to pray in that holy space for wisdom from God,' Trump told an audience of Jewish officials.

'This city, like no other place in the world, reveals the longing of the human heart – to know and worship God.'

Trump issued a proclamation on Wednesday calling for a national 'day of prayer for permanent peace' on May 29, the upcoming Memorial Day holiday.

'On this ceremonious day, we remember the fallen, we pray for a lasting peace among nations, and we honor these guardians of our inalienable rights,' he said.

'I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time when people might unite in prayer. I urge the press, radio, television, and all other information media to cooperate in this observance,' Trump added.

President Trump Declares a National Day of Prayer for 'Permanent Peace'

Bob Eschliman

[Charisma News](#)

Memorial Day was once meant to honor the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in the service of their country.

While it remains that way for many Americans, for most in more

recent times, it's become the "unofficial start of summer," and a day of picnics, barbecues and retail shopping sales. President Donald Trump is asking the country to take a step back and recognize the day as it was meant to be celebrated. Additionally, he's asking the country to set aside one hour, beginning at 11 a.m. locally, for prayer for permanent peace.

The president signed his annual Memorial Day proclamation on Wednesday night. It states:

Memorial Day is our nation's solemn reminder that freedom is never free. It is a moment of collective reflection on the noble sacrifices of those who gave the last measure of devotion in service of our ideals and in the defense of our nation. On this ceremonious day, we remember the fallen, we pray for a lasting peace among nation and we honor these guardians of our inalienable rights.

This year, we commemorate the centennial anniversary of America's entry into World War I. More than 4.7 million Americans served during [The Great War](#), representing more than 25 percent of the American male population between the ages of 18 and 31 at the time. We remember the more than 100,000 Americans who sacrificed their lives during "[The War to End All Wars](#)," and who left behind countless family members and loved ones. We pause again to pray for the souls of those heroes who, one century ago, never returned home after helping to restore peace in Europe.

On Memorial Day we honor the final resting places of the more than one million men and women who sacrificed their lives for our nation, by decorating their graves with [the Stars and Stripes](#), as generations have done since 1868. We also proudly fly America's beautiful flag at our homes, businesses, and in our community parades to honor their memory. In doing so, we pledge our nation's allegiance to the great cause of freedom for which they fought and ultimately died.

In honor and recognition of all of our fallen service members, the [Congress](#), by a joint resolution approved May 11, 1950, as amended (36 U.S.C. 116), has requested the president issue a proclamation calling on the [people of the United States](#) to observe each Memorial Day as a [day of prayer](#) for permanent peace and designating a period on that day when the people of the United States might unite in prayer. The Congress, by Public Law 106-579, has also designated 3:00 p.m. local time on that day as a time for all Americans to observe, in their own way, the [National Moment of Remembrance](#).

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [DONALD J. TRUMP](#), [President of the United States of America](#), do hereby proclaim Memorial Day, May 29, 2017, as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time when people might unite in prayer. I urge the press, radio, television and all other information media to cooperate in this observance.

I further ask all Americans to observe the National Moment of Remembrance beginning at 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day.

I also request the governors of the [United States](#) and its territories, and the appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half-staff until noon on this Memorial Day on all buildings, grounds and naval vessels throughout the United States and in all areas under its jurisdiction and control. I also request the people of the United States to display the flag at half-staff from their homes for the customary forenoon period.

Brown: Trump will come around on climate change

Carla Marinucci

[Politico](#)

[SAN FRANCISCO](#) – [California](#) Gov. [Jerry Brown](#), one of the Democratic Party’s most outspoken critics of Republican climate change policy, said Wednesday he now believes that President [Donald Trump](#) is a political “realist” who will likely listen to what [Pope Francis](#), [China](#) and other world leaders are saying on the key issue – and that progress under his administration may be “not as disastrous as we thought a few months ago.”


Brown cited Trump’s meeting with Pope Francis on Wednesday – and the delivery of a papal encyclical on climate change – as one reason for optimism. Other positive signs: China’s growing efforts to contain pollution and the effects of global warming, and the Trump administration’s approval this week of \$657 million for the electrified Caltrain project in the San Francisco [Bay Area](#).

“President Trump is a realist – and there’s nothing more real than the atmosphere and the chemistry that determines our weather and our long-term climate,” Brown told reporters at a climate change conference hosted by the Netherlands in San Francisco on Wednesday. “I don’t know that he’s going to come aboard immediately – but I do know that with our efforts in California, joining with other states and other provinces in the world, that we will be successful in pushing this agenda.

“There will be some bumps in the road,” Brown said. “There’s a great deal of denial – I see that in some of the people [Trump has] appointed. But I’d say the trend is toward dealing with

climate change – and I don't think President Trump will stand in the way of that, ultimately.”

The California governor – who has in the past lambasted Republicans as “luddites” on the climate change issue and Trump as a climate change denier – said he took it as a good sign that the president met with Pope Francis and that the two discussed the issue.

 California Gov. Jerry Brown poses in a group shot during the joint Netherlands and [California Environmental Protection Agency](#) conference called “Climate is Big Business” at the Presidio in San Francisco. | AP Photo

“Don't underestimate the power of the [Holy Father](#),” Brown said. “The pope is talking about climate change, he's handing him an encyclical ... and there are many conservative leaders in the world who support” efforts to reduce climate change.

The papal encyclical calls for drastic cuts in fossil fuel emissions, and the gift has been viewed as pressure on Trump to not withdraw from the Paris climate accord.

Trump has recently played up his admiration and positive relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Brown noted that the fact that “China is asserting such a world leadership role” in the matter is key. Brown will head to China next month to meet with Chinese leaders “and further that effort ... and I don't think President Trump will want to stand aside as this climate story unfolds.”

Brown also cited the federal funding for Caltrain – the electrification of a commuter rail project that serves tens of thousands of workers daily in Silicon Valley – as a sign of progress, because it comes in spite of objections from [GOP](#) Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and the Republican House delegation.

“Obviously, President Trump had a very different view than Mr. McCarthy,” Brown said. While it appeared initially that the

project was in danger from the Republican opposition, “that’s the wonderful thing about politics – no matter what someone says today doesn’t mean they won’t change their minds tomorrow.”

[LA sheriff says feds should restore military gear for police](#)

The sheriff told the [House Judiciary Committee](#) that it was critical for the [federal government](#) to reconsider the curtailment of a program that provided the equipment

Michael Balsamo

[Associated Press](#) via [PoliceOne](#)

LOS ANGELES – The leader of the nation’s largest sheriff’s department said Wednesday that federal officials should restore the flow of surplus [military equipment](#) to local law enforcement agencies to ensure officers aren’t put in danger when responding to active shooter calls and terrorist attacks.

[Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell](#) told members of the House Judiciary Committee that it was critical for the federal government to reconsider the curtailment of a program that provided military-style equipment, including military grenade launchers, bayonets, armored vehicles and high-powered firearms and ammunition, to state and local [police departments](#).

“What we’re trying to be able to do is to avail ourselves to

the tools necessary to be able to put between our deputies and the danger – an active shooter, an explosion, those kinds of things,” McDonnell told The Associated Press Wednesday.

McDonnell stressed that the majority of the items his department had received through the program were generators, medical supplies, lockers and tools.

Then-[President Barack Obama](#) issued an executive order in 2015 that curtailed the program, restricting access to some surplus equipment after an outcry over the use of military gear when police confronted protesters in [Ferguson, Missouri](#) after the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown. Police responded in riot gear and deployed tear gas, dogs and armored vehicles. At times they also pointed assault rifles at protesters.

Since the executive order was put into place, the [Defense Logistics Agency](#) recalled hundreds of pieces of surplus equipment provided to police agencies through the program.

Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo said he didn’t see a problem with the program, but said police departments should enact policies to ensure the equipment is used appropriately. The equipment could also be used during natural disasters or major floods, he said.

“There is no offensive equipment other than rifles,” Acevedo told members of the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigation. “Other than that, it’s all defensive.”

State and local police organizations have insisted that military-style gear and vehicles help to protect officers and the public. An armored vehicle played a key role in the police response to the December 2015 terror attack in San Bernardino.

“In a terrorist situation, who gets the call? People call 911 and local police show up,” McDonnell said. “We can’t expect our people to be successful in our attempts to do that if we

don't give them the proper equipment to protect them in that effort."

Los Angeles sheriff's officials have also received armored vehicles, ballistic vests and helmets through the program, he said. Records show the sheriff's department also received at least one mine-resistant vehicle as part of the program.

"The equipment isn't necessarily used on a daily basis, but can be available during the right circumstances," McDonnell said.

McDonnell conceded that some departments have not used their equipment "in a way the public would be satisfied with" but said police agencies need to implement stringent guidelines for when the equipment is used.