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Senate Democrats Unveil Bill to Curb Climate Change, Create Jobs

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WASHINGTON, DC, September 30, 2009 (ENS) - The United States today took a big step towards enacting legislation to combat global climate change.

U.S. Senators John Kerry of Massachusetts and Barbara Boxer of California, both Democrats, introduced the Kerry-Boxer bill, formally known as the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act to limit greenhouse gas emissions while putting Americans back to work.

It is a companion bill to legislation passed by the House of Representatives in June, and, if approved by the Senate, would be harmonized with the House bill and sent to President Barack Obama for his signature.

"This is a security bill that puts Americans back in charge of our energy future and makes it clear that we will combat global climate change with American ingenuity. It is our country's defense against the harms of pollution and the security risks of global climate change," said Kerry, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"Our health, our security, our economy, our environment, all demand we reinvent the way America uses energy," said Kerry. "Our addiction to foreign oil hurts our economy, helps our enemies and risks our security. By taking decisive action, we can and will stop climate change from becoming a threat multiplier that makes an already dangerous world staggeringly more so."



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Senator John Kerry introduces the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act on Capitol Hill with Senator Barbara Boxer, right. (Photo courtesy [The Sierra Club](#))

Senator Boxer said, "We know clean energy is the ticket to strong, stable economic growth - it's right here in front of us, in the ingenuity of our workers and the vision of our entrepreneurs. We must seize this opportunity, or others will move ahead. This is our time. Global warming is our challenge. Economic recovery is our challenge. American leadership is our challenge. Let's step up right now. Let's not quit until we have fulfilled our responsibility to our children and our grandchildren."

The bill targets a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050 from 2005 levels, stating that this is "the minimum scientists judge necessary to avert a climate disaster."

The bill accomplishes these goals through a Pollution Reduction and Investment system that covers less than two percent of American businesses and keeps American industry competitive during the transition to a new energy economy, according to a summary issued by the two senators.

The transition to clean energy means ensuring that all of America's energy sources - from coal and nuclear to solar and wind - are as clean and efficient as possible without damaging our short-term competitiveness.

Making America more energy independent means investing in all of these sources of power as well as in a bold cutting-edge transmission and distribution system that reaches every part of America, the senators said.

President Barack Obama issued a supportive statement today, saying, "I applaud Chairmen Kerry and Boxer for their leadership on comprehensive energy reform. With the draft legislation they are announcing today, we are one step closer to putting America in control of our energy future and making America more energy

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independent."

"My administration is deeply committed to passing a bill that creates new American jobs and the clean energy incentives that foster innovation. I commend Senators Boxer and Kerry for their work and look forward to signing comprehensive energy legislation that addresses this urgent challenge," the President said.

Critics were quick to jump on the new bill. Senator James Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican who is the Ranking Member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, said, "Despite an earnest attempt, including eight months of deliberation and negotiation to refashion the obvious, Senators Kerry and Boxer produced yet another massive energy tax that will destroy jobs, raise electricity and gasoline prices, and make America less competitive."



Senator James Inhofe
(Photo courtesy Office of the Senator)

"What's more, this bill is even worse than the energy tax passed in the House, Inhofe said. "The sponsors know this, so the bill is lacking in key details, an attempt, no doubt, to hide the central fact: this is an energy tax that will affect every American."

Senator Kerry shot back, "There is no tax increase anywhere in the bill. Plain and simple."

"We predicted long ago that those on the other side would adopt the misleading jargon of oil companies, lobbyists, and special interests, which maximize their profits at the expense of progress," Kerry said.

"Let's be clear," he said. "The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act will put America back in control of our energy future. It invests in coal, natural gas, nuclear, and renewable energy companies that make America great, while vigorously protecting the American consumer."

Kerry invoked a Republican President to defend the new bill. "This is the same approach that President George H.W. Bush and bipartisan senate leadership supported and signed into law in the 1990s to dramatically reduce acid rain," he said.

"While I've noted that the Democrats have the votes to pass this bill through the Environment and Public Works Committee, that does not mean Republicans will stand down," Inhofe said.



There are also critics from the

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Dominion Virginia Power's Chesterfield plant is the largest fossil-fueled generating station in the state.
(Photo courtesy DVP)

environmental community who take the opposite position. They say the bill does not go far enough towards curbing climate change.

The center for Biological Diversity issued a statement saying, "the targets in the Senate bill - like those in the House bill - are tragically inadequate. This legislation would

not save the polar bear and hundreds of other species and ecosystems because it simply does not go far enough fast enough."

"The scientific consensus is clear," the Center said. "We must reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide to no more than 350 parts per million. Leading climate scientists have called for reductions of approximately 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and yet this bill aims to deliver only a 20-percent reduction from 2005 levels by then. These cuts, while a start, simply will not stop runaway global warming."

Some environmentalists were more supportive. Frances Beinecke, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, "This is the right step at the right time. It confronts the growing problem of global warming head-on – before it's too late to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. It calls for a 20-percent cut in carbon emissions by 2020. That's a strong and achievable goal. It will reduce the carbon pollution that causes global warming, while accelerating the move to a clean energy future for our country."

"A new analysis from UC Berkeley confirms that clean energy and climate legislation can strengthen our economy and create jobs," Beinecke said. "According to the report, comprehensive energy legislation with strong efficiency measures can create as many as 1.9 million jobs between 2010 and 2020."

Other environmentalists were noncommittal. "This draft is an important starting point for senators to negotiate effective climate legislation that can win 60 votes," said Environmental Defense Fund Legislative Director Elizabeth Thompson.

"The bill is silent on how emissions permits would be allocated, leaving room for negotiations as the bill moves forward in the Senate," Thompson said.



The Sierra Club staged a rally on Capitol Hill to support the Kerry-Boxer bill. (Photo courtesy The Sierra Club)

Supporters of the bill held a rally at the Capitol Building to celebrate its release. Veterans and clean energy activists attended as well as Senators Amy Klobuchar, Bernie Sanders, Frank Lautenberg, Mark Udall, Ben Cardin, Tom Udall, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jeanne Shaheen, and Kirsten Gillibrand.

The bill contains \$10 billion over 10 years to support research and development of new carbon capture and sequestration technology to advance the next generation of coal-fired power plants. It mandates performance standards to provide definitive guidance to the industry on advanced technology implementation.

The bill would establish a new federal program that encourages investment in low-carbon power generation especially natural gas.

Nuclear energy would be encouraged and supported by increased financing for loan guarantees and regulatory risk insurance and new programs for research and development for advanced nuclear technology and nuclear waste management.

The bill provides support for energy efficiency, new renewable energy standards, and investments in infrastructure. It would provide grants to cities and states that for investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency, retrofits and building upgrades. It would increase annual investments in scientific innovation to advance clean energy technology.

The bill establishes a cap-and-trade carbon market starting by listing the greenhouse gases to be regulated - carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulfur hexafluoride, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) emitted as a byproduct, perfluorocarbons, and nitrogen trifluoride.

It directs the U.S. EPA to establish a federal greenhouse gas registry and comprehensive reporting system for greenhouse gas emissions and establishes an annual tonnage limit on greenhouse gas emissions

from specified activities.

The bill directs the EPA Administrator to establish a cap or "tonnage limit for each year" on greenhouse gas emission allowances, with one allowance representing the permission to emit one ton of greenhouse gases.

And it directs the EPA Administrator to create a "market stability reserve" of emission allowances that will be auctioned at a minimum set price (\$28/ton in 2012) that increases annually.

Electricity generators, refiners and importers of petroleum-based and other specified liquid fuels, fluorinated gas manufacturers, and emitters of nitrogen trifluoride are covered entities starting with emissions in 2012.

Specified industrial sources are covered starting with emissions in 2014. Local distribution companies that deliver natural gas are covered starting with emissions in 2016.

The bill says there will be penalties for parties that fail to comply.

It allows covered entities to use a total of up to two billion tons of domestic and international offset credits in lieu of allowances to demonstrate compliance for a portion of their emissions. Of the two billion tons of offset credits, three-quarters may be derived from domestic offsets and one-quarter from international offsets.

It allows the President to issue international offset credits for activities that take place in developing countries.

The bill establishes an Office of Offsets Integrity within the Department of Justice to supervise and coordinate investigations and civil enforcement of the carbon offsets program.

Click [here](#) to read the full text of the legislation.

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