



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on May 11, 2010

Cap-and-Trade, Dead or Alive

The White House special climate envoy has assured U.N. delegates from more than 40 countries the U.S. is ready to move forward on a comprehensive international climate change treaty without Congressional approval. Delegates met last week in an informal negotiating session preliminary to the upcoming United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Mexico later this year. CBS News reports that Todd Stern, Obama's special envoy for climate change, admitted cap-and-trade legislation is unlikely to pass the U.S. Senate this year but said it is "not crucial" to progress in Mexico.



He is not the only U.S. official to concede legislative defeat. "The House-passed cap-and-trade bill is dead," said U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) in a [press release](#). Graham has withdrawn his support for [legislation](#) he and Senators John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) crafted in an attempt to build on [H.R. 2454](#) that passed the house last summer. He claims their efforts have created "a renaissance in nuclear power which leads to energy security and fosters job creation." However, he believes now is not the time to push forward on climate change legislation, asserting serious debate is compromised in the wake of the Gulf of Mexico oil leak. Cap-and-trade supporters counted on expansion of offshore exploration and drilling to gain Republican support in a trade-off for reduced carbon emissions.

Senators Kerry and Lieberman will press on without Graham and have announced their intent to introduce [new cap-and-trade legislation](#) on Wednesday, May 12. In a joint statement they expressed confidence their new bill will pass this year because, "as a nation, we can no longer wait to solve this problem which threatens our economy, our security and our environment."

Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute disagrees. Responding to a *New York Times* [editorial](#), he wrote, "The chance that the Senate will pass a comprehensive energy-rationing (a.k.a. climate) bill this year remains close to zero. BP's big oil spill in the Gulf changes very little." Ebell pointed to constituent backlash from House passage of cap-and-trade last summer, which prompted Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) to move the Senate version to the back burner where it has remained since. Ebell says Americans know cap-and-trade amounts to an indirect tax because energy rationing will force prices up. "What's become increasingly apparent is that this legislation no longer has much to do with reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It's a monstrous collection of payoffs to big business special interests, ranging from Goldman Sachs to Duke Energy to General Electric."

Regardless of the fate of senate efforts, President Obama has [warned](#) his administration will regulate emissions in a "command-and-control" system if Congress fails to pass legislation. Stern's comments at last week's U.N. meeting underscore the seriousness of that threat and the reality that climate change legislation is far from dead. "If we don't get it this year, we'll keep pressing to get it next year," Stern



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Photo: U.S. top climate envoy Todd Stern speaks during a press conference at the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen on Dec. 9, 2009: AP Images



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