



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 6, 2010

Energy and Land Bills Fall by Wayside

As Congress appears to be approaching a compromise on the Bush tax cuts, other major issues with which they need to contend are the federal budget and the START treaty. Little time will be afforded to a number of energy and environmental bills.

That does not mean, of course, that the Democrats are giving up on their green bills, however. *Congressional Quarterly* writes, "Senate Democrats are still working to salvage a package of public lands projects and water projects that is being held up by Republican James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma, and lawmakers continue to hope that other pieces of their legislative wish can be considered by Congress this year."



However, hopes that these bills would be addressed in the lame-duck session were nearly obliterated when the Republicans announced last week their intent to filibuster the introduction of any other legislation until tax and budget issues were resolved.

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In response to the Republicans' opposition, Melinda Pierce, lobbyist for the Sierra Club, remarked, "The party of 'no' has spoken."

Democratic Senator Byron L. Dorgan of North Dakota maintains that the Democrats will do their best to address legislation that will set up a renewable-electricity standard, as well as other energy provisions. "We're trying to see if there is a crevice or a crack through which we can move some of these pieces."

He admits, however, "It doesn't look promising, but we're not discontinuing the effort."

Typical of Congress, however, energy legislation may be added to other bills that could ensure their passage.

For example, *Congressional Quarterly* writes, "Renewable-energy industries found encouragement in a [tax 'extenders' package](#) unveiled last week by Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont."

Also under the Baucus plan, ethanol subsidies could be extended, as well as grants and tax credits for renewable-energy industries like wind and solar, and for those homeowners who improve energy efficiency of their houses.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid also promised West Virginia Democrat John Rockefeller IV that [Senate Bill 3072](#), which imposes a two-year moratorium on the EPA greenhouse gas controls, would be addressed in the lame-duck session. The bill found support in 20 groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Chamber of Commerce, all who assert that the EPA regulations set to be implemented in January would "stifle job growth" and "further burden state budgets already hampered by the slow revenue growth and increased costs."



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Unfortunately, no vote has been scheduled on the bill.

In addition to energy bills, land bills appear to be halted. *Congressional Quarterly* reports, "This year could spell the end of the congressional tradition of passing a broad package of public lands measures and water preservation measures during the last weeks of a session. Before the Republicans began blocking Senate action, Reid had said the chamber would consider a bipartisan package of water, public lands, and wildlife bills."

However, allegations of bipartisan support were perhaps premature as Senator Inhofe, who is a top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, declared the legislation to be "too expansive" and asserted that it "set unrealistic authorization levels."

Undeterred, Democrats are working feverishly to narrow the bill and remove the more controversial provisions in order to attract enough votes to overcome the filibuster. The final package is said to include less than two dozen bills that were written out of several committees with bipartisan votes, reported a spokesperson for the Environmental and Public Works Committee.

The spokesperson explained, "The bills represent the work of committees and senators over the course of this Congress, and, for many, over the course of a career. They deserve a vote."

Other measures affected by the GOP filibuster include [Senate bill 1462](#), an energy bill approved by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, another bill that would [tighten government control of offshore oil drilling](#), and an energy bill that would institute a [renewable-electricity standard](#) that would have required utilities to produce at least 15 percent of their energy from renewable energy sources by 2021.

In most, if not all cases, conservative Americans can probably be thankful that Congress will have unfinished business. For example, Congress' renewable-electricity standard is being put in place to give [tax breaks](#) to large corporations, [not to actually provide a new source of electric power](#) to consumers in [lieu of coal and nuclear generated electricity](#).



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