



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 9, 2010

Obama Woos Senators for Climate-change Legislation

President Obama is turning up the heat on Congress to pass comprehensive climate-change legislation, meeting today with key Senators from both parties at the White House. He hopes to craft a bill that will revive stalled efforts to implement a cap-and-trade carbon tax and reduce emissions from so-called greenhouse gases.



The Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, [S. 1733](#), better known as "Cap and Trade" passed the House last June in the form of [H.R. 2454](#). But it has stalled in the Senate, as Democrats find their support of the bill damaging poll numbers back home. [Reuters](#) reports White House advisors say it has suffered because of "the president's intense focus on healthcare reform." Last month, the President [admitted](#) he does not expect it to pass.

The bipartisan group meeting with Obama today includes 14 Senators, among whom are John Kerry (D-Mass.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), three outspoken supporters of climate and energy legislation working to draft a bipartisan "compromise" bill. *The Hill* reports Kerry is encouraged Obama is meeting in person with legislators to help move the process forward. It also quotes Lieberman predicting that "the president will use [the meeting] as an opportunity to state his commitment that we adopt bipartisan energy independence, job-creating climate change legislation." Lieberman said their initial plans involve an immediate cap-and-trade system on utilities, a separate tax on motor fuels, and, eventually, a carbon tax on industrial polluters.

Senators John Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) will also attend. Both have introduced legislation to [suspend EPA authority](#) to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Rockefeller's bill, S. 3072, would prevent EPA from regulating stationary sources for the next two years. House Democrats have launched [companion legislation](#) to Rockefeller's measure. Murkowski introduced a [disapproval resolution](#) to halt EPA's actions, claiming it is the sole responsibility of Congress to make decisions regulating emissions. However, both Senators support broad climate-change legislation.

Other Senators invited to the closed-door meeting are Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), George LeMieux (R-Fla.), and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.).

Senators Cantwell and Collins have introduced their own alternative to cap and trade, [S. 2877](#), the Carbon Limits and Energy for America's Renewal (CLEAR) Act. Cantwell calls it a "cap and dividend" approach. Instead of setting up a carbon-emissions trading market, the legislation would auction emissions permits to fuel producers, funneling 75 percent of revenues from those permits back to



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consumers to offset higher energy prices. The bill, introduced in December, has no other cosponsors. Obama has not offered his own climate-bill proposal, but according to the [Wall Street Journal](#), he instead intends to play the role of mediator to achieve bipartisan cooperation, using some bargaining cards at his disposal. He has already promised billions in loan guarantees for [nuclear reactor construction](#), and he can "open — or keep closed — new areas on the Outer Continental Shelf for oil and natural gas exploration."

Administration officials attending today's meeting are Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

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