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President Obama urges House to pass climate & energy bill

By Jon H. Harsch

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President Barack Obama once again voiced his support Thursday afternoon for the House climate change bill scheduled for a floor vote Friday. Speaking in the Rose Garden, he said that "I urge every member of Congress, Democrat and Republican to come together to support this legislation. I can't stress enough the importance of this vote." The President also acknowledged that "this is going to be a close vote," blaming that on "the misinformation that's out there that suggests there's somehow a contradiction between investing in clean energy and our economic growth."

Directly responding to concerns raised by some groups including the American Farm Bureau Federation that rural America would be a net loser, the President said the American Clean Energy & Security Act "gives rural communities and farmers the opportunity to participate in climate solutions and generate new income."

Obama insisted that passing what he called a "jobs bill" will create millions of new jobs across the country. He said the bill "will lead to the creation of new businesses and entire new industries and that will lead to American jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced." He said the bill is needed because "We've seen our reliance on fossil fuels jeopardize our national security, we've seen it pollute the air we breathe and endanger our planet."

Addressing criticism of the bill, he said:

- "There's no disagreement over whether our dependence on imported oil is endangering our security. We know it is.
- "There's no longer a debate about whether carbon pollution is placing our planet in jeopardy. It's happening.
- "And there's no longer a question about whether the jobs and industries of the 21st century will be centered around clean, renewable energy. The only question is which country will create these jobs and industries.
- "Instead of increasing the deficit, it is paid for by the polluters who currently emit dangerous carbon emissions.
- "And above all, it will protect consumers from the costs of this transition."

Another sign of concerted White House support for the Waxman/Markey bill was that Carol Browner, Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change, spent

Thursday on Capitol Hill in meetings with “fence sitters” whose votes are needed to pass the legislation.

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs expanded on the President’s remarks, explaining that the misinformation about the bill includes Republican charges that the bill would reduce jobs in the United States. Gibbs said that as shown by the jobs already created by the Recovery Act, “creating a marketplace for clean energy will create jobs.” He said other misinformation concerns opponents who “have used inaccurate information or made up numbers on how much a piece of legislation like this would cost the average American family 11 years from now.” Instead of the \$2,000 to \$3,000 per family per year in higher utility bills as Republican critics have charged, Gibbs said that “CBO reported that, I believe that’s the equivalent of 60 cents a day in 2020.” [Note: 60 cents a day would equal \$219 per year. The actual Congressional Budget Office estimated about \$175 per household or 48 cents per day.]

Gibbs also noted that as part of the effort to support the bill, “the President is spending time talking with members of Congress” and “the energy team and the congressional team have been working for quite some time on this, and I think others in the White House have made calls too.” He said the White House energy team includes Carol Browner, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Energy Secretary Steven Chu.

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