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Congressional leaders clash over Waxman/Markey climate bill

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Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said Thursday that the Senate is watching the House climate-change bill closely “to see what the House does.” He said he’s met with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Subcommittee Chair Ed Markey (D-MA), the co-sponsors of the House’s American Clean Energy & Security Act coming up for a House vote on Friday. He noted that on the Senate side, “We had the six committee chairs in a meeting we had ten days ago, we’ve all agreed on timelines to move forward on this and this fall we’re going to have a bill here in the Senate and we’re going to be able to vote on it.”



Senate Democratic leadership promising to move ahead with climate change legislation, L to R, Charles Schumer (D-NY), Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Patty Murray (D-WA). Photo: Agri-Pulse

House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) is also watching the Waxman/Markey climate and energy bill. In a Thursday press briefing, Boehner said: “When it comes to energy, Washington Democrats I think are poised to make matters worse by imposing a job-killing energy tax courtesy of Speaker Pelosi. This is going to force small businesses and their workers and families to pay more for electricity, gasoline and other products that are made in America that have a high energy content. This bill will also cost 2.3 to 2.7 million Americans their jobs. That’s because the high-energy industries, like the steel making industry won’t be located in the United States any more. They are going to be shipped to our competitors, China, India, South Korea, who don’t even have half of the EPA guidelines and environmental guidelines that we have here in America.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) countered such claims from Boehner and other Republicans by releasing an American Clean Energy & Security Act “fact sheet” which concludes that “Doing nothing is not an option. During the Bush-Cheney years, our dependence on foreign oil increased, average American household energy costs went up \$1,100, American job growth was the slowest of any administration in 75 years, and carbon pollution was ignored for far too long.” In contrast, Pelosi maintains that the Waxman/Markey bill will “revitalize our economy by creating millions of new jobs, increase our national security by reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and preserve our planet by reducing the pollution that causes global warming.”

Pelosi adds that the climate bill makes “farmers and ranchers a part of the solution, with carbon-offsetting crops and forests, and biofuel and wind farms to repower America.” Citing the recent U.S. Global Change Research Program report, her summary warns that without urgent corrective action as provided for in the Waxman/Markey bill, “Average global temperatures could increase 11 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century, with greater overall increases in the United States exceeding global averages.”