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## House passes Waxman/Markey climate bill in 219-212 vote

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At 7:14 Friday evening, Democrats on the House floor cheered and several Republican members applauded as the vote tally showed the American Clean Energy and Security Act, H.R. 2454, had won the 218 votes needed for passage. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and President Barack Obama who had pinned their hopes and political reputations on passing climate-change legislation got their wish. The final vote was 219 to 212 to pass the comprehensive climate and energy bill. Pelosi welcomed the vote as a bipartisan victory – one made possible because eight Republicans broke party ranks to vote with the Democrats, offsetting the 44 Democrats who voted against the bill.

The Democratic leaders explained following the vote that they remained uncertain of the outcome until late Friday afternoon. That uncertainty was evident from several unusual circumstances surrounding the bill. One surprise was that an extra 309 pages were added to the bill at 3 AM Friday morning, leading Republicans to raise questions on the floor about whether anyone had read the entire bill and about what additional surprises might lurk in the 309 last-moment pages. House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) in fact spent more than an hour near the end of the day's debate reading provisions from the 309 pages. In a last-minute appeal to House members, Boehner called the bill "the most profound piece of legislation that has come to the floor of this body in the last 100 years" and urged members to defeat the bill.

Another unusual circumstance was that the bill's chief author, House Energy & Commerce Committee Chair Henry Waxman (D-CA), engaged in several floor discussions with fellow Democrats who wanted assurances about specific provisions in the bill. This led Energy & Commerce Committee Ranking Member Joe Barton (R-TX) to note that deal-making to secure votes for the bill was continuing right on the floor.

Earlier deal-making included the sweeping compromise agreed Wednesday between Waxman and House Agriculture Committee Chair Collin Peterson (D-MN). The compromise added specific provisions to give farmers, ranchers and foresters the right to sell carbon credits based on carbon sequestration achieved by farm, livestock and forest management practices. The compromise also specified that the U.S. Department of Agriculture rather than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will run this offsets

program. Based on the compromise, Peterson switched from opposition to supporting the bill.

After the Friday vote, Peterson said that “The offset program run by USDA creates a new market opportunity for farmers, ranchers and forestland owners who can play an important role in efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners have been participating in conservation and carbon sequestration programs for many years, working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and support a thriving renewable energy industry. This legislation recognizes those efforts and encourages these important activities.”

To check on how individual members voted on the climate & energy bill, click here: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll477.xml>

#30