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President Obama sees renewable energy as key to recovery

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Following his Thursday afternoon meeting “with the CEOs of some of the most innovative energy companies in America,” President Barack Obama said that “new ways of producing and saving and distributing energy offer a unique opportunity to create millions of jobs for the American people.”

Obama welcomed the energy & climate-change bill passed by the House June 26th as “an extraordinary piece of legislation that would make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy in America. It will reduce our dependence on foreign oil. It will prevent the worst consequences of climate change. And above all, it holds the promise of millions of new jobs – jobs, by the way, that can’t be outsourced.” He said “it’s now up to the Senate to continue the work that was begun in the House to forge this more prosperous future.” Referring to Republican attacks on the Waxman/Markey bill as a “jobs-killer” and an “energy tax,” Obama said that “We’re going to need to set aside the posturing and the politics – and when we put aside the old ideological debates, then our choice is clear. It’s a choice between slow decline and renewed prosperity. It’s a choice between the past and the future.”

The Texas Energy Summit held in Houston Thursday featured a very different perspective. Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) who led the Republican effort to defeat the House’s energy and climate bill which passed 219-212 said at the summit that the bill risks “the utter destruction of our economy” and “threatens to lock the U.S. into an era of economic stagnation and global decline that will kill American industry and send jobs overseas.” Rep. John Culberson (R-TX) said “Republicans are working to cut spending and to cut taxes on individuals and businesses. We are also working to open up domestic sources of oil and gas and build new nuclear reactors for the short term, while promoting conservation and investment in alternative energy and new technology for the future.”

Reacting to his Republican critics, Obama said Thursday that to combat the current recession, “we’ve achieved more in the past few months to create a new clean energy economy than we had achieved in many decades before. The recovery plan will double our country’s supply of renewable energy, and is already creating new clean energy jobs.” He added that “we have to act now to build a new foundation for lasting growth. And energy is one of the pillars of this new foundation, essential both to our recovery and our long-term prosperity.”

As proof that change is already happening, Obama said the CEOs he met with “told me that they’re looking to hire new people, in some cases to double or even triple in size over the next few years. They are making money and they are helping their customers save money on the energy front.” He said many of the new energy companies are exporting their products and services “but unfortunately, their biggest markets right now are Europe and Japan because we haven’t done enough to emphasize clean energy in our own country.” He blasted “this idea that somehow if we stand still and we don’t do anything that we’re going to be better off.” Instead, he said, “We know we’re going to have to change how we use energy.”

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