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Johanns calls Boxer-Kerry climate bill 'direct assault' on farmers

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Three hours after Democratic senators unveiled their comprehensive climate change bill on Wednesday, Republican senators held a press conference to charge that the bill would devastate the U.S. economy without generating any environmental benefit.

Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE), a former Secretary of Agriculture, began his remarks by recalling that "I grew up on a small dairy farm in northern Iowa." Then he said "I can't state strongly enough that the House bill, this [Senate] bill, the president's policies relative to global warming, are a direct assault on agriculture. This kind of legislation, beyond a shadow of a doubt, is an assault on farmers and ranchers in an economic way, and when they are hurt, our rural and small town economies are very directly hurt because they depend upon the farmer and rancher for the success of Main Street."



Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE), flanked by Sens. John Thune (R-SD) and James Inhofe (R-OK) at a Republican press conference Sept. 30, blasted the Boxer-Kerry climate bill as "a direct assault on agriculture."

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), the Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee which will help craft the final version of the Senate climate bill, said the Democrats' climate proposal is, like their health reform legislation, "a massive bill, massive reform, and potentially massive cost to the American public." She said that in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – a goal she supports – "nuclear has got to be part of the solution."

Senator John Thune (R-SD) predicted the bill would create "a massive transfer of wealth from the Midwest to the East and West coasts." He added that "The ag community is told that this could be good for them, but all we know is that everything is going to go up. Electricity is going to go up, diesel fuel is going to go up, natural gas is going to go up, fertilizer is going to go up, the input costs are going to go up, we know that for a fact." He concluded that if the bill is passed, it would be a "huge new energy tax on the American economy at a time when we are trying to pull ourselves out of a recession."

Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) used a copy of the 821-page bill to illustrate his point that "there are a lot of places where it's fill-in-the-blank." He waved a copy loaded with red markers on each page with blank spaces "where we have no idea what the implications are, but we know that it is going to raise prices for American families, it's going to make it much tougher for American families." He said the Republican alternative to the Democrats' climate bill is to "continue to work for ways to use American energy, to make it as clean as we can, as fast as we can, without raising prices for American families."

For a link to the Democrats' 821-page climate bill and a summary of ag-related provisions in the bill, go to: <http://www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20090929H3.pdf>