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## Third day of Senate climate bill hearings turns testy

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After two days of relatively well-mannered Senate Environment Committee hearings on the Kerry-Boxer climate change bill, tempers flared in Thursday's final hearing.

Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA), previously a Republican, regretted the "heavy note of partisanship which has been present in these hearings." Nuclear-power champion Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) blasted the Democrats' proposed legislation as "a national windmill policy" and "a national energy tax." Sen. Kit Bond (R-MO) insisted that "cap-and-trade represents a giant \$3.6 trillion gas tax on America's drivers, farmers, truckers and small businesses." Saying the bill would increase natural gas prices, he asked "Do we really want to make U.S. farmers dependent on Russian fertilizer?"



With American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman at the far right, seven of the 53 witnesses who testified in three days of Senate hearings on the Kerry-Boxer climate change bill. Photo: *Agri-Pulse*.

Next up, Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH) charged that “states like Ohio are going to get 70% of our allowances taken care of, and your state of California is going to get 140%. That makes a shifting of \$385 million from some states to other states . . . California is going to make out like a bandit with this legislation.”

Raising his voice while Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-CA) used her gavel to signal he was exceeding the time limit, Voinovich continued: “I think that we need a sense of bipartisanship in this committee.” Recalling Boxer’s warm welcome the previous day for Republican former Senator John Warner, Voinovich asked “Does your definition of bipartisanship mean someone that agrees with you?” He charged that “to jam this thing through here is not going to be good and America is going to be very, very upset about it.”

Boxer replied in kind, telling Voinovich “I think the speech you just made is flat wrong . . . I have the EPA analysis and they say there are barely any regional differences whatsoever.” Talking over each other as they raised their voices, they continued. Voinovich: “It is not a complete analysis. . .” Boxer: “I did not interrupt you Senator. . .” Voinovich: “You are editorializing on my comments. . .”

Boxer concluded the testy exchange with a reference to the threat from Ranking Member James Inhofe (R-OK) to prevent a markup which requires at least two minority members present for a quorum. “I hope we don’t see a boycott of the markup of a landmark bill,” Boxer said. “That would be tragic . . . All of the charges I hear from the other side just don’t hold up in the light of day. There is just fear mongering going on and the fact is we are going to look at a brighter future if we move forward.”

With that heated exchange completed, it was time to turn to the day’s first panel of witnesses. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) told the witnesses – a majority of whom were appearing in support of the Kerry-Boxer bill – “Well, gentlemen, see what we are up against.”

Except for some minor flare-up, the hearing’s focus turned to witness testimony which for the most part praised the direction of the Kerry-Boxer bill while calling for some specific improvements.

Perhaps the day’s most concise summary of the issues involved in the climate debate came from Center for American Progress Action Fund President and CEO John Podesta who told the committee:

- “The Senate global warming debate has focused on pollution limits and timetables, carbon markets and allocations. But we have lost sight of our principal objective: building a robust and prosperous clean energy economy.”
- “Moving beyond fossil fuel pollution will involve exciting work, new opportunities, new products and innovation, and stronger communities. Our current national discussion about constraints, limits, and the costs of transition overshadows the economic opportunity of clean energy investments.”
- “It is as if, on the cusp of the Internet and telecommunications revolution, debate centered only on the cost of digging trenches to lay fiber optic cable.”
- “Many of our economic competitors see investments in clean energy technologies as key to their long-term sustainable economic growth. Germany, Spain, Japan,

China, and even India are building the foundation for a prosperous low-carbon future.”

- “Many leaders in the American business community realize the competitive threat to the United States if we do not join other nations by investing in our clean-energy sector. Venture capitalist John Doerr and General Electric CEO Jeff Immelt warn, ‘There is still time for us to lead this global race, although that window is closing. We need low-carbon policies to exploit America’s strengths—innovation and entrepreneurs’.”

For copies of the written testimony from the 53 witnesses in this week’s three Senate climate-bill hearings Oct. 27, 28 and 29, as well as webcasts of three hearings, go to: <http://epw.senate.gov>.

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