



Flurry of climate change activity ahead of Copenhagen talks

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Washington, Dec.3 – In a letter to President Obama, nine Senate Democrats warned Thursday that:

“Climate change is a serious and growing threat to the United States and the world. The consequences of climate change are already being felt at home and will intensify in the years ahead in ways that place the U.S. economy and future generations at risk. Internationally, the adverse impacts of climate change will threaten vital U.S. national security, economic, energy security and humanitarian interests. Smart climate change policies would guard against these risks while also spurring clean energy investment that promote economic growth and create good domestic jobs.”

The nine senators then list ten principles they want included in both U.S. legislation and any international agreements emerging from the climate change talks being held Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen. They warn that without such safeguards, “poorly designed climate policies could also jeopardize U.S. national interests by imposing burdens on U.S. consumers, companies and workers without solving the climate challenge.”

The nine Senate Democrats are Mark Begich (AK), Sherrod Brown (OH), Kay Hagan (NC), Tim Johnson (SD), Amy Klobuchar (MN), Carl Levin (MI), Claire McCaskill (MO), Debbie Stabenow (MI), and Arlen Specter (PA).

The senators’ letter calls for a global agreement to reduce emissions based on binding international commitments that include “ambitious, quantifiable, measurable, reportable and verifiable actions” and “appropriate consequences for those countries not meeting their international commitments.” Additionally, the senators call for dealing with trade issues to avoid “the migration of polluting activities from one nation to another” by providing for “border adjustments on imports from nations that have not yet adopted sufficient emission control measures.”

The letter supports technology transfer to help developing countries transition to clean energy development as long as intellectual property rights are protected. It also notes that since the U.S. is a technology leader, the U.S. “has much to gain from new initiatives to promote U.S. clean energy exports.”

The senators recommend that “The United States and other nations should create targeted incentives to help developing nations take ambitious action.” They add specifically that U.S. “Climate legislation should include substantial financial incentives to promote U.S. clean energy exports and reduce tropical deforestation” with these incentives targeted toward nations “acting in conformity with their obligations.”

In a separate development Dec. 3rd, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) introduced legislation Thursday, the “International Climate Change Investment Act of 2009” designed “To reduce global warming pollution through international climate finance, investment, and for other purposes.” Co-sponsored by Sens. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Ted Kaufman (D-DE), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), the Kerry bill would provide developing countries with financial assistance to “address the strategic, social, political economic, cultural and environmental consequences of global climate change that are likely to have disproportionate adverse impacts on developing countries which have less economic capacity to respond to such impacts and are likely to pose long-term challenges to the national security, foreign policy and economic interests of the United States.”

In response to Thursday’s letter from the nine Senate Democrats, the White House replied that:

- “The president agrees with many of the senators’ recommendations and has worked with other world leaders to advance a Copenhagen accord that reflects them. Domestically, the U.S. has taken numerous steps this year to transition to a clean energy economy — from setting an aggressive new fuel economy standard for new cars and trucks to making an historic investment in clean energy in the Recovery Act this year. The president worked closely with members of Congress as they passed comprehensive energy legislation out of the House and is working with senators to pass a bill that will decrease our dependence on foreign oil, create jobs and enhance American competitiveness.”
- “In addition to taking strong action at home, the president has kept climate change at the forefront of our foreign policy throughout the year. Following bilateral meetings with China and India, each country announced that they would take significant mitigation actions and stand by those commitments, and they called for full transparency as to their implementation. Since those meetings, China has announced a mitigation plan. And the president has worked with Prime Minister Rasmussen in support of a comprehensive accord in which all countries take meaningful steps, that has immediate operational effect and rallies a global response to the global threat of climate change.”

To read the senators’ four-page letter to President Obama, go to:

www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091203H4.pdf

To read Senator John Kerry’s 81-page bill “To reduce global warming pollution through international climate finance, investment, and for other purposes,” go to:

www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091203H5.pdf

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