

## Sen. Murkowski wants climate addressed by Congress – not by EPA through regulation

By Jon H. Harsch

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Washington, Dec. 17 – At an *Energy Daily* press briefing Thursday, Senate Energy Committee Ranking Member Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) pledged to do everything possible to block the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from using Clean Air Act regulations to curb greenhouse gas emissions. While saying that emissions should be reduced to deal with climate change, she insisted that Congress needs more time to write good legislation aimed at cutting emissions in ways which don't hurt the U.S. economy.

“I don't think that we develop our best policy when we've got a gun to our head.” That is Murkowski's explanation for filing a Senate “disapproval resolution” to block EPA from acting on an EPA endangerment finding which could trigger stringent emissions regulations as soon as next March.



Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). Photo: Agri-Pulse.

Former California Congressman Cal Dooley who's now CEO of the American Chemistry Council, a chemical companies' trade association, welcomed Murkowski's pledge. He warned that unless Congress acts, “We are faced with the prospect that by March 31, stationary sources could be subject to permitting under the Clean Air Act.” He called it “absolutely critical” that “we find a way to have Congress influence EPA and the administration to just delay any regulation of stationary sources under the Clean Air Act.” He said blocking EPA regulation would give Congress “the appropriate time in order to craft this very complex policy that has the potential to improve the global environment but also has to

be done in a manner which protects the economy here in the United States and protects jobs.”

Dooley said that if Murkowski’s disapproval resolution fails to win enough support in the Senate, her seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee offers the possibility that she could “hopefully achieve a delay through the appropriations process”

Murkowski herself warned that “advancing climate policy through regulation. . . is the worst tool that we could be using.” She said that the EPA’s sole mission is to reduce emissions with “No balancing of the effect on the economy, no balancing of the effect on jobs.” She said her goal instead is “meaningful reduction in emissions while at the same time not harming the economy.” She said Congress should be given time “to work through this legislative process, cumbersome as it is.” To do that, she said, “we need to know that the EPA is not advancing their regulations.”

As an example of what can be done, Murkowski held up the bipartisan energy bill passed by the Senate Energy Committee this year. She said the bill “is good and responsive to the economy while at the same time advances us I think in the right direction as we try to build out renewable energy, as we move toward greater efficiencies in conservation, and allowing for a focus on our increased domestic production in this country.”

Murkowski welcomed the fact that President Obama will attend the final day of the Copenhagen climate talks this week. She said “it is important that he be there to defend our interests as we talk about the financial contributions, as we talk about the technology sharing.” She said “the President being there and sending that message of our commitment to be a global participant in this global problem is right.”

#### **Murkowski on climate change:**

“I am one who has come to the conclusion that we are seeing changes, changes that are visible . . . you don’t have to be a scientific researcher to know and understand that something is happening that is causing the migratory patterns of the caribou to move. You don’t have to be a scientist to understand that when you have salmon going up into a part of the northern coastline where we’ve never had salmon before. . . Is it climate change, is it global warming, is it weather?

“I’m not going to arm wrestle with somebody about whether man’s emissions are 10% of the problem or 20%. If we are contributing to levels of pollution, to levels of emissions and we can responsibly reduce those, why wouldn’t we? If we can do that in a responsible way, without pain to the economy, why would we not be good stewards of our land?”

On the EPA’s endangerment finding, Murkowski said that “Unfortunately, I think that decision to let the international community know that we are moving was made at the expense of the domestic economy . . . this economy is going to be impacted enormously and very, very, very quickly. So again, we are going to be looking for those avenues and those opportunities where we can preempt EPA on this issue.”

Lexi Shultz, deputy director of the Union of Concerned Scientists’ Climate and Energy Program, responded to Senator Murkowski’s planned disapproval resolution by warning that “This resolution would block EPA and 14 states from implementing standards for vehicles and power plants. EPA would not be able to finalize new vehicle standards that

will save Americans money at the gas pump, curb tailpipe emissions, and cut America's oil dependence. Likewise, it would prevent the agency from curbing global warming emissions from coal-fired power plants and other facilities that emit massive amounts of pollution."

Shultz noted that "The EPA's endangerment finding was a response to the Supreme Court decision directing the agency to take an honest look at the science and determine if global warming emissions threaten public health and welfare. From heat waves to lower agricultural yields, to Alaskans having to move miles inland as sea levels rise, the threat of climate change is clear . . . Senators need to quit posturing and start making progress on climate legislation. At a time when states, the executive branch, and the House all have taken action, the Senate is lagging behind because of obstructionist tactics like this resolution."

Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) added his own warning from Copenhagen where he has been participating in the climate change conference. He pointed to a contrast: "In Copenhagen, island nations plead with the world to act before their homes are destroyed by rising sea levels, developing nations talk about their farms turning into deserts because of a changing climate, and scientists give their latest assessments of the incalculable damage that awaits us if we don't act. But in Washington, DC the forces of the status quo are putting enormous resources into warping the conversation, pushing polluter-funded discredited junk science."

Kerry criticized "ads paid for by Big Oil, using scare tactics to try to stop reform" and making "outlandish claims about gas prices . . . about taxes." He pointed out that the Kerry-Boxer climate bill awaiting Senate floor consideration "doesn't raise taxes" and "won't add a penny to the deficit." He charged that opponents of climate change legislation are spreading "distortion after distortion . . . anything they can think of to try to distract people, create confusion about the science, and delay action."

For a report on Sen. Murkowski's Dec. 14 Senate floor speech calling for Senate action to block the EPA from using the Clean Air Act to curb CO2 emissions, go to:  
<http://www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091214H1.pdf>

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