



## **Sen. Murkowski blasts contradictions in Obama's energy policy positions**

**By Jon H. Harsch**

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Washington, Feb. 11 – Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) charged in a Senate floor speech Thursday that President Obama's proposed 2011 budget supporting renewable energy contradicts his State of the Union Address support for nuclear power and more oil and gas drilling.

Murkowski, the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy Committee, said she was "pleasantly surprised" by President Obama's energy references in his State of the Union Address two weeks ago. "In addition to calling for bipartisan legislation, the President indicated his support for more nuclear energy and new oil and gas development. Those are all positive steps, not least because they would draw strong support here in Congress and help create jobs all across the country."

Unfortunately, Murkowski said, the administration's proposed budget shows that "the vision the President presented to Congress does not match up with what some of his agencies have in mind." She charged that "Quite a few of the budget proposals would impair our ability to establish a comprehensive energy policy that addresses climate change and reduces our dependence on foreign oil. Instead of promoting bipartisanship, I'm concerned those same proposals will only deepen the divisions within Congress."

On nuclear energy policy, Murkowski called the Department of Energy guaranteeing more loans for nuclear plants "a step in the right direction." However, she added, "it's been a year now, and this administration has yet to help finance a single nuclear project. That certainly isn't due to lack of ability, because DOE already has authority to guarantee \$18 billion worth of new projects. And it certainly isn't due to cost, because if carried out properly, this important support won't cost American taxpayers a single dime." She added that the administration plan to abandon the Yucca Mountain project for nuclear waste disposal is "a step backward in its budget, away from progress. . . DOE is abandoning our best option for a repository and exposing taxpayers to billions in liability for the government's breach of contract."

Regarding domestic oil and gas production, Murkowski blasted "the various proposals for tax hikes, new administrative fees, and efforts to make the permitting process more

burdensome. . . Instead of seeking to increase production, the budget request includes at least 21 new taxes and fees for the oil, natural gas, and coal industries. Collectively, those increases would raise producers' cost of business by an estimated \$80 billion. That would translate to higher energy prices for consumers. Fewer jobs for the American people. And let's not forget what basic economics tells us – when you tax something, you get less of it, so we'll probably become more dependent on foreign energy, as well.”

Murkowski said that the only “direct fossil fuel subsidies that this Administration could eliminate” are the LIHEAP subsidy, which helps needy Americans afford home heating oil and gas, and the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve.

Addressing climate change issues, Murkowski said that despite the President calling on Congress to pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation, “just a few days later, the EPA requested more than \$40 million in order to begin regulating greenhouse gas emissions on its own. At least 41 members of the Senate are already on record as opposing that approach. That's about as bipartisan as the climate debate has been in this Congress.”

Murkowski charged that “by allowing the EPA to move forward, the President is actually limiting Congress' ability to develop a bipartisan bill. Instead of debating cap-and-trade or a carbon tax, we'll spend at least some of our time talking about the EPA's regulations. As I've said before, the EPA's actions will harm our economy at a time we can least afford it. I also believe the debate over climate policy belongs in Congress, because that's the only place where the best interests of our constituents can be fully represented.”

“The truth is that this Administration is still trying to have it both ways. On one hand, its budget assumes a cap-and-trade bill will pass, and on the other, it's seeking millions of dollars to impose back-door climate regulations.” She called on the administration “to work with Congress to pass a balanced bill. The threat of regulations has not worked, it will not work, and it's time to take the command-and-control approach off the table.”

Murkowski concluded that “I'm happy to work with the President and his Administration on nuclear energy, offshore development, and even bipartisan legislation. But I'm not willing to support many of the energy-related proposals within the Administration's new budget.”

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#30