



Obama & Pelosi commit to cutting federal greenhouse gas emissions & passing climate legislation

By Jon H. Harsch

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Washington, Jan. 29 – Perhaps because of or despite the fact that climate change legislation remains stalled in a sharply divided Congress, President Obama and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) both spoke up Friday to highlight federal government and congressional commitments to “go green.”

President Barack Obama announced that the federal government will reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution by 28 percent by 2020. He hopes that by reducing and reporting GHG pollution, as called for in Executive Order 13514 on Federal Sustainability, the Federal Government will lead by example in building the clean energy economy. Actions taken under this Executive Order are designed to “spur clean energy investments that create new private-sector jobs, drive long-term savings, build local market capacity, and foster innovation and entrepreneurship in clean energy industries.”

Commenting on the President’s announcement, Pelosi said that “The effort to build a future founded on sustainability, clean energy, and conservation begins in homes and offices nationwide. The federal government is no exception.” She added that “Our ‘Green the Capitol’ initiative is a symbol of Congress’ commitment to the future. We’ve reduced our reliance on fossil fuels with wind power and conservation, started printing the *Congressional Record* on 100 percent recycled paper, replaced traditional light bulbs with energy-efficient alternatives, and increased recycling across all Members’ offices. So far, we have already reduced our carbon footprint by 74 percent. These steps save money for our nation’s taxpayers, create good-paying jobs, and cut pollution caused by global warming.”

Pelosi said “President Obama’s announcement marks a critical step forward in our effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the federal government – the largest consumer of energy in the U.S. economy.” Referring to the climate bill passed by the House last year but facing solid GOP opposition in the Senate, Pelosi said that “With the President’s renewed call to complete work on a clean energy bill this year, we look forward to putting people to work building up the industries of tomorrow, reducing our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, and preserving our natural resources for generations to come.”

As the single largest energy consumer in the U.S. economy, the federal government spent more than \$24.5 billion on electricity and fuel in 2008 alone. Achieving the federal GHG pollution reduction target announced by the President would reduce federal energy use by the equivalent of 646 trillion BTUs, equal to 205 million barrels of oil, and taking 17 million cars off the road for one year. This is also equivalent to a cumulative total of \$8 to \$11 billion in avoided energy costs through 2020.

“As the largest energy consumer in the United States, we have a responsibility to American citizens to reduce our energy use and become more efficient,” President Obama explained. “Our goal is to lower costs, reduce pollution, and shift Federal energy expenses away from oil and towards local, clean energy.”

Federal departments and agencies will achieve greenhouse gas pollution reductions by measuring their current energy and fuel use, becoming more energy efficient and shifting to clean energy sources like biofuels, biomass, solar, wind and geothermal. Examples of agency actions that are underway are available on the White House Council on Environmental Quality website and can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/ceq.

On October 5, 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13514 on Federal Sustainability, setting measureable environmental performance goals for federal agencies. Each federal agency was required to submit a 2020 GHG pollution reduction target from its estimated 2008 baseline to the White House Council on Environmental Quality and to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget by January 4, 2010. The Federal target announced Friday is the aggregate of 35 federal agency self-reported targets.

Greenhouse gas emissions serve as a useful metric to measure the effectiveness of agency energy and fuel efficiency efforts as well as renewable energy investments. Agencies are already taking actions that will contribute towards achieving their targets, such as installing solar arrays at military installations, tapping landfills for renewable energy, putting energy management systems in federal buildings, and replacing older vehicles with more fuel efficient hybrid and flex-fuel models.

As a next step, the Office of Management and Budget will validate and score each agency’s sustainability plan, assuring a long-term return on investment to the American taxpayer. To ensure accountability, the White House reports that “annual progress will be measured and reported online to the public.”

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