

# The New York Times

## Climate Bill Advances in House

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
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WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats narrowly won a key test vote Friday on sweeping legislation designed to combat global warming and usher in a new era of cleaner energy. Republicans said the bill included the largest tax increase in American history.

The vote was 217-205 to advance the White House-backed legislation to the floor, and 30 Democrats defected, a reflection of the controversy the bill sparked.

The legislation would impose limits for the first time on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas pollution from power plants, factories and refineries. It also would force a shift from coal and other fossil fuels to renewable and more efficient forms of energy. Supporters and opponents agreed the result would be higher energy costs, but disagreed widely on the impact on consumers.

President Barack Obama has made the measure a top priority of his first year in office. The president, along with White House aides and House Democratic leaders, scrambled for the votes to assure passage. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has pledged to get the legislation passed before lawmakers leave on their July 4 vacation.

The Senate has yet to act on the measure, and a major struggle is expected.

In the House, the bill's fate depended on the decisions of a few dozen fence-sitting Democrats. Some are veterans from coal-producing states, but most are conservatives and moderates from contested districts who feared the political ramifications of siding with the White House and their leadership on the measure.

A last-minute list of provisions accepted by Democratic leaders included several aimed at securing votes. Among them was a promise of additional money for farmers to reduce greenhouse gases on private agricultural land.

Democrats left little or nothing to chance. Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., confirmed by the Senate on Thursday to an administration post, put off her resignation from Congress until after the final vote on the climate change bill.

"The bill contains provisions to protect consumers, keep costs low, help sensitive industries transition to a clean energy economy and promote domestic emission reduction efforts," the White House in a statement of support for the legislation.

Republicans saw it differently.

This "amounts to the largest tax increase in American history under the guise of climate change," said Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind.

While the bill would impose a "cap-and-trade" system that would force higher energy costs, Republicans for weeks have branded it an energy tax on every American.

But Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., said there was a "moral imperative to be good stewards of the earth."

The legislation, totaling about 1,200 pages, would require the U.S. to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020 and about 80 percent by the next century.

U.S. carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels are rising at about 1 percent a year and are predicted to continue increasing without mandatory caps.

Under the bill, the government would limit heat-trapping pollution from factories, refineries and power plants. It would distribute pollution allowances that could be bought and sold, depending on whether a facility exceeds the cap or makes greater pollution cuts than are required.

Obama on Thursday called it "a vote of historic proportions ... that will open the door to a clean energy economy" and green jobs. "It will create millions of new jobs," Pelosi insisted.

Both Obama and Pelosi preferred to focus on the economic issues rather than on what environmentalists view as the urgency of reducing carbon emissions blamed for global warming.

The Rust Belt coal-state Democrats who have been sitting on the fence worry about how to explain their vote for higher energy prices to people back home — and how the vote might play out in elections next year.

Republicans have been quick to exploit those concerns.

"Democratic leaders are poised to march many moderate Democrats over a cliff ... by forcing them to vote for a national energy tax that is unpopular throughout the heartland," Republican leader John Boehner of Ohio said.

There was widespread agreement that under this cap-and-trade system, the cost of energy would almost certainly increase. But Democrats argued that much of the impact on taxpayers would be offset by other provisions in the bill. Low-income consumers would qualify for credits and rebates to cushion the impact on their energy bills.

Two reports issued this week — one from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office and the other from the Environmental Protection Agency — seemed to support that argument.

The CBO analysis estimated that the bill would cost an average household \$175 a year; the EPA put it at between \$80 and \$110 a year.

Republicans questioned the validity of the CBO study and noted that even that analysis showed actual energy production costs increasing \$770 per household. Industry groups have cited other studies showing much higher cost to the economy and to individuals.

On the Net:

American Clean Energy and Security Act:  
<http://tinyurl.com/ph52vs>



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