

3 Dems, GOP Fight Over EPA Climate Rules

Dina Cappiello, Associated Press, 3-4-11

WASHINGTON -- Three Democrats are joining a Republican effort in the House to block the Environmental Protection Agency from reducing the gases blamed for global warming.

Rep. Nick Rahall of West Virginia, Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota, and Rep. Dan Boren of Oklahoma will sponsor a bill drafted by Republicans that bars the EPA from using federal law to control greenhouse gases from power plants, refineries and other industrial facilities. The legislation was being introduced Thursday in the House and Senate.

The bill is among a handful of measures introduced in the Republican-controlled House targeting the EPA and its efforts to control air and water pollution. None of the EPA's actions is as controversial as its rules on global warming, which Republicans and some Democrats say will raise energy costs and cause job losses in an already fragile economy. The Obama administration counters that controlling global warming pollution is necessary based on scientific evidence that it is threatening public health and the environment. The EPA also says the rules will ultimately yield more health and economic benefits than costs, much like many other Clean Air Act regulations.

While passage of some measure to hamstring the EPA in the House was all but assured by the Republican majority, the addition of three Democrats shows the momentum against the agency's global-warming regulations is growing.

"I am dead set against the EPA's plowing ahead on its own with new regulations to limit greenhouse gases," Rahall said in a statement. Rahall, who worries regulation will harm coal producers in his district, said that Congress should set policy governing global warming gases. Rahall and Boren voted against a Democrat-backed bill setting a limit on such pollution when it passed the House in June 2009.

Peterson supported that bill, which was championed by President Barack Obama, but only after making deals to ease the cost for farmers. The legislation died in the Senate, where Democrats said they did not have enough votes to overcome a Republican filibuster.

South Carolina Republican Lindsey Graham, the only Republican to work with Democrats to help draft a bill to limit greenhouse gases, has also signed on to sponsor the legislation blocking the EPA. The lead authors are House Energy and Commerce Chairman Fred Upton, R-Mich., Rep. Ed Whitfield of Kentucky and Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma. Inhofe disputes the widespread scientific consensus that the burning of fossil fuels is causing Earth's temperature to rise.

Graham had been negotiating with Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., for months to craft legislation last year, but withdrew his support in May, saying it was impossible to pass because of disagreements over offshore drilling. His support of Senate action to reduce greenhouse gases had angered Republicans in his home state, but Graham has long argued that it was better than EPA regulation of carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gases.