

Copenhagen deal seen as first step in long process

Sandra Emerson, Bay Area News Group, 12-22-09

The nonbinding agreement reached Friday in the final hours of the United Nation's Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen may have left some disappointed and wondering what steps will be taken next.

The United States, Brazil, South Africa and China developed an agreement that disappointed some local environmental advocates but gave them enough to feel positive about.

"I'm optimistic," said Martin Kennedy, a geology professor at UC Riverside. "I think it's obviously something that has to be done, and it's being done."

The agreement reached in Denmark will call for developed countries to give billions of dollars to undeveloped countries annually until 2020 to help them deal with the effects of climate change. It will also require countries to list their actions in reducing emissions and implement a way of monitoring what actions are actually taken.

Kennedy said the next step is to get The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, or "cap and trade," passed.

"Independent of Copenhagen, what the United States does is absolutely critical. It may be the most critical in the world," Kennedy said. "The United States when passing this legislation will become a global leader, and it will introduce a new economic endeavor that I feel is important and represents the future and a very exciting future. I'm very positive about how things are changing right now."

The bill, which would impose limits on how much greenhouse gas businesses can emit, was passed in June by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Businesses that emit more than the limit would have to "buy" offsets from businesses that emit less than the maximum.

"The cap and trade is an approach designed to control carbon emissions and will impose huge costs upon American citizens via a carbon tax on all goods and services produced in the United States," said Matt Schumsky, a Republican strategist based in San Bernardino County. "The average family of four can expect to pay an additional \$1,700 more each year. It is predicted that the United States will lose more than 2 million jobs as the result of cap-and-trade schemes."

Schumsky said he does not support the pledge to hand out billions of dollars to foreign governments and views the issue of global warming to be fraudulent.

"When we can't predict the weather a few weeks from now, how do we predict the weather 30 or 40 years from now?" Schumsky said.

As the issue of global warming continues to dominate many conversations, more Americans are viewing global warming as a natural event rather than man-made.

"Fortunately, people are starting to wise up about the made-up science that is being shoved down their throats by liberal politicians and liberal agenda driven major news networks," Schumsky said. "I mean, look at channels

like NBC, who have demanded writers incorporate `green' themes into all of their shows, yet not disclosing to the general public that their owners, General Electric, gain to profit from building more expensive energy options such as wind, water and hydro generators."

As of Thursday, 50 percent of likely voters believe global warming is caused by long-term planetary trends, not human activity, according to a Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey. Thirty-four percent view climate change to be human-induced.

The recent controversy over leaked e-mails from the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom may have triggered the public's skepticism of global warming.

In the e-mails, researchers admit to finding data that does not support the global warming theory. They also make threats to other researchers who do not share their views on climate change.

"Those were e-mails showing exactly how these people are falsifying data because the real data are showing that their predictions are completely wrong," Schumsky said. "I think people are kind of getting fed up with it."

Kennedy views "Climate-gate" as a noisy side show that doesn't reflect the opinions of scientists who have been studying climate change.

"There's no hesitation in science as to what's causing warming and what the outcome of that will be," Kennedy said. "There is an absolutely strong consensus in the scientific community, and `Climate-gate' is irrelevant at best. It may influence public opinion, but it's much more of the media event than it is a science event."