

# eco



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## Winds of Change in US Congress

Yesterday in Washington, Representative Henry Waxman, Chairman of the US House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee, and Rep. Edward Markey, Chairman of its Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment, released their much-anticipated draft domestic climate and energy bill, the American Clean Energy and Security Act. The legislation would set binding limits on US greenhouse gas emissions between 2012 and 2050, and establish a range of additional policies to spur clean energy technology deployment.

The bill would require major sources, one sector after another, representing an estimated 85% of US emissions, to reduce their emissions 20% below 2005 levels by 2020, 42% by 2030, and 83% by 2050.

While the 2050 reduction requirements are the same as those outlined by President Obama in his February budget message to Congress, the 2020 target is somewhat deeper than the President's 14% below 2005 levels proposal, and would cut emissions some 7%

below 1990 levels. The bill would also require reductions in emissions of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and black carbon, or soot.

Up to 2 billion tons a year would be allowed in offsets, split evenly between international offsets and domestic offsets from reductions in the uncapped sectors (primarily forests and agriculture). Five tons of offsets would be required for every four tons of emissions being offset, and the bill sets out stringent criteria for qualifying offsets to meet. But it should be pointed out – and this is an important caveat – that if the full 2 billion tons of offsets were to be used, domestic emissions reductions could be put off until well after 2020.

Electric utilities would be required to generate 25% of their electricity from non-hydro renewable energy sources by 2025 (the US currently gets a little more than 2% of its electricity from such sources), and to help their customers reduce their demand for electricity by 15% by 2020, compared to business-as-usual. It establishes a Low

Carbon Fuel Standard requiring transportation fuel providers to reduce the carbon intensity of their overall fuel mix by 5% in 2023, and 10% in 2030. It contains provisions to increase energy efficiency in buildings, appliances, vehicles, and industry. The bill also introduces incentives for early deployment of CCS, and would phase in mandatory use of CCS in new coal plants from 2015 on.

The bill would provide rebates to producers of carbon-intensive products such as steel and cement to prevent competitiveness impacts from the energy cost increases they would experience as a result of the emissions limits. In addition, the President would need to report to Congress by 2017 on whether the rebates have sufficiently addressed competitiveness impacts; if the answer were to be no, emissions allowances could be required for imports of carbon-intensive products from certain countries.

About 5% of the value of emissions allowances would be allocated to help developing countries reduce emissions from deforestation. The bill's authors estimate that, by 2020, these efforts would result in reductions equivalent to about 10% of US 2005 emissions. The bill would also provide assistance for widespread deployment of clean technologies in developing countries, and would create an International Climate Change Adaptation Program to provide assistance to vulnerable developing countries, but does not yet specify resource levels to be allocated to these purposes.

Finally, there is a scientific review provision, where every four years the US National Academy of Sciences would conduct an in-depth science and technology assessment, and make recommen-

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## The Nature of Urgency

While we debate and negotiate, let's not forget what is really at stake here. There is a growing possibility humanity will trigger runaway climate change, 'the Venus Syndrome', by which we may render the Earth unable to support life. If triggered, no level of privilege or material wealth will protect any individual or nation. No technology can isolate a sustainable bubble of life in a world of runaway climate change.

In the words of Dr. James Hansen (December 2008), "Now the danger that we face is the Venus Syndrome. There is no escape

from the Venus Syndrome [once triggered]. Venus will never have oceans again."

The survival of our children, of humanity, and of all life on Earth is at stake. Ultimately, there will be no separate winners and losers in these negotiations. Ultimately we all win, or we all lose. Let that recognition advise us in all we do here in Bonn, in our consultations with our governments, in our work when we return home, and in everything we do to ensure the strongest possible climate protection treaty this year in Copenhagen.

–US Congress, from front page  
dations as to whether further action is required.

Overall, the bill seeks a long-term transformation of the US economy. As Chairman Waxman stated in releasing the bill, “This legislation will create millions of clean energy jobs, put America on the path to energy independence, and cut global warming pollution. Our goal is to strengthen our economy by making America the world leader in new clean energy and energy efficiency technologies.”

Chairman Waxman hopes to move the bill through his committee by the end of May, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has committed to bring it to the House floor for a vote later this year. It will of course be subject to strong lobbying from many quarters, and the final legislation may differ substantially from the current draft. However, the new bill did yesterday receive broad support from the White House.

Prospects for action are less clear in the Senate, where Environment Commit-

tee Chairman Barbara Boxer has yet to announce a timeline for action, and where support from a supermajority (60 out of 100) of Senators would be needed to shut down efforts by opponents of climate action to block consideration of any serious climate bill on the Senate floor.

Of course ECO has many questions on the content of this bill, particularly as to how much it will contribute to the kind of ambitious aggregate emissions reduction target that the science requires. But coming on the heels of the two-year \$80 billion investment in clean energy resources in President Obama’s economic recovery package, introduction of the Waxman-Markey climate and energy bill represents a major step forward in the US policy debate. It demonstrates growing support in Congress for domestic and international action on global warming. And it puts additional pressure on countries like Canada and Japan, that have been hiding behind the US lack of action, to finally put their own emissions reduction cards on the table.



A Party demonstrating a previously unconsidered change in Land Use

## Five reasons for a 5-year commitment period

*Eco understands that there’s been much talk around about extending the time of a commitment period. Here are five reasons why we shouldn’t:*

1. *The science is changing fast, so we need to be able to respond.*
2. *Five years is within the political frame of reference for most governments. Ten years means it’s someone else’s problem.*
3. *If we get out of sync with the IPCC reports, perhaps we’ll have forgotten what they said.*
4. *With ten years, there’s more time before you have to face up to how big you’ve gotten.*
5. *If I’ve got 7-10 days to do my homework, I won’t do it on day one. By day seven, I might have a new teacher.*

*(Oh, and some countries like five year plans.)*

## LUDWIG

The style and décor at the Maritim has always reminded Ludwig of the villain’s headquarters in a Bond film. As a result he always half-expects to turn a corner to find a sinister figure with a cat on his lap, attempting to hold the world to ransom for billions of dollars. Except Ludwig understands cats are not very popular in the Arabian peninsula.

And so to India, whose representative yesterday compared the IPCC’s conclusions to “stating that the moon is made of green cheese”. Considering the IPCC’s impeccable scientific credentials, Ludwig is forced to conclude that the distinguished delegate from the Subcontinent must have information unavailable to the rest of us. Could India’s lunar probe be sending back startling information on Gorgonzola-bearing rocks?

Finally, Ludwig is very disappointed to learn that the dates for Copenhagen have been changed yet again. Most of those who attend these sessions are busy people with full diaries, and Ludwig feels it is important not to treat the calendar, and dates, in such a light manner.