

Poll: Climate Bills Help, Not Hurt, Jobs And Economy

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WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans believe steps taken to reduce global warming pollution will help the U.S. economy than say such measures will hurt it. It's a sign the public is showing more faith in President Barack Obama's economic arguments for limiting heat-trapping gases than in Republican claims that the actions would kill jobs.

In an Associated Press-Stanford University poll, 40 percent said U.S. action to slow global warming in the future would create jobs. Slightly more, 46 percent, said it would boost the economy.

By contrast, less than a third said curbing climate change would hurt the economy and result in fewer jobs, a message Republican members of Congress plan to take to an international global warming conference in Copenhagen this week.

"They're wrong," Ron Classen of Seattle, who participated in the poll, said of the GOP stance. "People are going to be shifted from one job to another," said Classen, a self-described fan of environmentalist and former Vice President Al Gore.

The survey's results seem to boost Democratic efforts to curb global warming pollution and sign on to an international agreement to reduce heat-trapping gases, despite the concerns many Americans have about the recession and the high unemployment rate.

For some, the recession has manifested itself in a nothing-left-to-lose attitude when it comes to tackling climate and to sparking a revolution in where and how the nation produces its energy.

"I don't know if anybody has looked around lately, but the economy is dead," said Jake Berglund, a home-improvement contractor from Portland, Conn. "We are in a sinking ship, and Obama has bought us enough life rafts to keep on going. But we need to figure out how to build a new boat when we are still on the water."

The poll, however, also suggests that Americans have limits to how much they want to pay to address global warming. Obama and many Democrats in Congress envision shifting the country away from burning fossil fuels to cleaner forms of energy, in a part by passing a new law that would set up a cap-and-trade system that puts a price on pollution.

While three-quarters of respondents said they support action of some kind on climate change, just as many said they would oppose the cap-and-trade system if it raised their electricity bill by \$25 a month. A majority — 59 percent — wouldn't

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support cap-and-trade if it meant paying \$10 extra a month for electricity.

Under cap-and-trade, companies that release greenhouse gases when they manufacture electricity would pass the cost of buying pollution permits or investing in cleaner technologies down to consumers.

This added cost allows alternative sources of energy such as wind and solar that tend to be more expensive to compete with cheaper but dirtier forms of energy such as coal.

"People just don't like higher taxes and higher prices simply to manipulate their behavior," said Jon Krosnick, a Stanford University professor of political science who has been polling the public on global warming for 15 years. "Much larger majorities continue to favor government requiring businesses or offering them tax incentives to reduce their emissions even if it would cost Americans money."

The Obama administration has doled out billions in economic stimulus dollars to help fund clean energy technologies. It has also pursued mandates that would require cleaner-burning cars and require power plants and factories to install technologies to reduce heat-trapping pollution from their smokestacks.

By increasing the cost of doing business, the cap-and-trade bill and the regulations backed by the White House may mean there would be fewer jobs in coal mining, oil refining and other industries that emit greenhouse gases. But many jobs would probably be replaced by "green jobs" such as making wind turbines, installing solar panels and insulating homes.

Walter Hornbeak, a 67-year-old Republican from Tennessee who built equipment for coal- and nuclear-fired power plants in the 1980s, said, "We have too much imagination to sit there and be stagnant."

Reducing global warming "would give the private sector the incentive to go out and start investing and finding ways to help more," Hornbeak said.

Some Republicans in Congress disagree.

"If President Obama has his way, the Copenhagen conference will produce mandatory emissions limits that would destroy millions of American jobs and damage our economic competitiveness for decades to come," Rep. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., said in the GOP radio address last Saturday.

There is a recognition, based on the AP poll, that eventually everyone would have to change their habits. Sixty-five percent said global warming could be slowed only if people make major changes in their lifestyle.

"It would hurt," said Joe Fletcher, a tax accountant from Woodbridge, N.J., who was among the third who said reducing global warming pollution would cost jobs and harm the economy. Fletcher, however, still supports cap and trade.

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"But if you look at it in an overall planetary perspective, you might need to do something like this ... to help your environment and grandchildren," Fletcher said.

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