

Anti-EPA Bill Threatened With Presidential Veto

by Jim Abrams, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House raised the stakes Tuesday on the Senate's first major climate change vote of the year, threatening a presidential veto of a Republican-led effort to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from carrying out regulations to control greenhouse gases.

The White House, citing the environmental damage caused by the Gulf oil spill, said the measure to overturn new EPA regulations would increase the nation's dependence on oil and other fossil fuels and "block efforts to cut pollution that threatens our health and well-being."

With the veto threat, the "resolution of disapproval" offered by Alaska Republican Lisa Murkowski has little chance of becoming law. But the outcome of the vote on Thursday is being seen by some as a crucial test as the Senate prepares to take up major climate change legislation this summer.

A dozen Republicans, including Murkowski, argued at a news conference Tuesday that the EPA regulations, when implemented next year, would both kill jobs and usurp the authority of Congress.

Senators will make "a statement as to whether or not Congress or unelected bureaucrats at the EPA should set climate policy for this country," she said.

"This is an attempt to turn the attention of the American people away from what's happening with respect to the oil spill and saying what we really should be doing to protect the environment is give all of this new power to the EPA," said Rep. Bob Bennett, another Republican.

Democratic Sen. Jay Rockefeller, who represents coal-rich West Virginia, sided with Murkowski, saying in a statement Tuesday that Congress, not the unelected EPA, should decide major economic and energy policy.

"I believe we must send a strong message that the fate of West Virginia's economy, our manufacturing industries and our workers should not be solely in the hands of EPA," Rockefeller said. "It is not clear whether this resolution will pass, and the White House issued a statement on Tuesday threatening a veto if it does pass. But my vote is squarely in favor of securing West Virginia's future."

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, in remarks Tuesday to the Small Business Environmental Conference, dismissed warnings that the rules would hurt small businesses and said the resolution "would ignore and override scientific findings, allowing big oil companies, big refineries and others to continue to pollute without

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any oversight or consequence."

The EPA actions grew out of a 2007 Supreme Court ruling that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases could be regulated under the Clean Air Act if it were shown that such gases endanger health.

Determining that global warming did pose a long-term danger to health, the EPA has issued standards requiring large polluters to reduce the amounts of greenhouse gases they release into the air. It exempted small sources of such gases from the regulations for the next six years.

The regulations were also the basis of tough new fuel economy standards the administration announced this year that force the auto industry to reduce pollution from tailpipe emissions.

The Murkowski measure, Jackson said, "would gut EPA's authority in the clean cars program. Our dependence on oil would grow by 455 million barrels."

The Obama administration says it would prefer that Congress enact climate change legislation but has used the threat of EPA regulations to goad lawmakers into action.

Murkowski's resolution has 41 co-sponsors in the Senate, including three moderate Democrats. A companion House resolution has 140 co-sponsors.

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