

# Senate climate-change bill to be unveiled this week

September 29 2009, By Robert Schroeder

---

Two top Senate Democrats are set to introduce a climate-change bill this week that would put new limits on carbon emissions, as world leaders prepare for a climate summit in Denmark after agreement last week by the G20 nations on phasing out subsidies for fossil fuels.

Sens. Barbara Boxer, the California Democrat who chairs the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and John Kerry, D-Mass., will reportedly unveil their bill on Wednesday after months of closed-door meetings. The bill will be modeled largely on legislation passed by the House of Representatives in June that aims to cut [carbon emissions](#) by 17 percent by 2020 and more than 80 percent by 2050 compared to 2005 levels, reported ClimateWire and other publications.

But it's unclear how far the bill will get this year, or how fast. The bill from Kerry and Boxer would come as senators are intensely busy with health-care legislation, President Barack Obama's top domestic priority. Obama is aiming to sign a health-care overhaul this year that would cut costs and cover the uninsured.

At the same time, the Boxer-Kerry bill also comes just over two months before a Dec. 7 meeting in Copenhagen, where world leaders are hoping to finalize a new agreement to reduce greenhouse gases. At last week's G20 meeting in Pittsburgh, leaders pledged to "intensify (their) efforts, in cooperation with other parties, to reach agreement in Copenhagen." They also agreed to slash subsidies in the "medium term" for oil and other [fossil fuels](#) as part of their fight against global warming.

But observers say there is little time for Congress to finish a bill before the Copenhagen conference.

"I don't think expectations are that a bill will be signed, sealed and delivered by that point," says Environmental Defense Fund spokesman Tony Kreindler. "There's not a lot of legislating room between now and December."

Indeed, a climate-change bill faces a steep uphill climb in the Senate after passing the House on a narrow 219 to 212 vote in June. Republicans have consistently portrayed Democrats' efforts to reduce global warming as a tax on families and businesses, and say it will lead to loss of jobs and U.S. competitiveness. Moreover, Democrats from industry-heavy states like Michigan and Ohio want breaks for manufacturing industries that would be affected by the legislation's caps on emissions.

Obama argues that the House bill will create jobs through new energy investments, but critics say the "cap and trade" system at the heart of the bill amounts to a tax. Under the "cap and trade" system, companies would buy and sell permits to meet emissions limits.

Kerry, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said last week that the bill would be a "starting point" to win over moderate and conservative Democrats as well as Republicans, reported ClimateWire.

"I have no pretensions, and neither does Barbara, that this will be the final product. It is a starting point, a commitment, full-fledged, across party lines to do what we need to do to protect the planet for the next century," Kerry said last week. Hearings on the bill are expected early next month.

Meanwhile, senators' focus on health-care legislation has delayed two

energy-related congressional hearings originally scheduled for this week. Hearings in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee about the economic effects of climate change legislation and managing federal forests in response to climate change "will be rescheduled as soon as possible," according to a committee statement on Monday.

The committee's chairman, Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, will be involved in the [Senate](#) Finance Committee's work session on the health-care bill. The finance panel is set to resume its consideration of the bill on Tuesday morning.

---

A summary of House bill is available:  
[energycommerce.house.gov/Press\\_11{0090724/hr2454\\_housesummary.pdf](http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_11{0090724/hr2454_housesummary.pdf)

---

*(c) 2009, MarketWatch.com Inc.*

Visit MarketWatch on the Web at [www.marketwatch.com](http://www.marketwatch.com)

*Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.*

Citation: Senate climate-change bill to be unveiled this week (2009, September 29) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-senate-climate-change-bill-unveiled-week.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--