

Obama to plead US case at global warming summit

November 26 2009, By H. JOSEF HEBERT , Associated Press Writer



President Obama speaks during the pardoning of the National Thanksgiving Turkey, Courage, in a ceremony in the North Portico of the White House, in Washington, Wednesday, Nov. 25, 2009, (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

(AP) -- President Barack Obama will commit the United States to substantial cuts in greenhouse gas pollution over the next decade - despite resistance in Congress over higher costs - when he travels to a major climate conference in Copenhagen next month.

Obama will attend the start of the conference Dec. 9 before heading to Oslo to accept the Nobel Peace Prize. He will "put on the table" a U.S. commitment to cut emissions by 17 percent over the next decade, on the way to reducing heat-trapping pollution by 80 percent by mid-century,

the White House said.

Cutting U.S. carbon dioxide emissions by one-sixth in just a decade would increase the cost of energy as electric utilities pay for capturing carbon dioxide at coal-burning power plants or switch to more expensive alternatives. The price of gasoline probably would increase, and more fuel-efficient automobiles - or hybrids that run on gasoline and electricity - probably would be more expensive.

Obama's promise of [greenhouse emissions](#) cuts will require Congress to pass complex climate legislation that the administration says will include an array of measures to ease the price impact. The bills before Congress, for example, would have the government provide polluters free emissions allowances in the early years of the transition from fossil fuels, as well as direct payments to many consumers facing high costs.

Carol Browner, Obama's assistant for energy and [climate change](#), on Wednesday cited a Congressional Budget Office study that said there would be \$173-a-year estimated cost to the average household by 2020 if greenhouse gases were cut by 17 percent from 2005 levels. But the CBO analysis also said that if cost-blunting measures in the legislation were not taken into account, the cost to households could jump to \$890 per household.

Other studies conducted by pro-industry groups have put the average household costs between \$900 to more than \$3,000 a year, although many of those studies do not take into account new energy conservation efforts and assume a more pessimistic view of new technology development that could bring actual consumer costs down.

Obama's stopover on the conference's second day - instead of later, when negotiations will be most intense and when most other national leaders will take part - disappointed some European and U.N. climate officials,

as well as some environmentalists.

Others said Obama's personal appeal will resonate with the delegates from more than 75 countries and help reset the U.S. image on the climate issue after eight years in which the Bush administration staunchly opposed mandatory reductions in greenhouse gases.

Yvo de Boer, the United Nations climate chief, said it is important for the United States to establish emissions reduction targets and a financial commitment to helping developing countries address climate change.

"If he comes in the first week to announce that, it would be a major boost to the conference," de Boer told The Associated Press.

Obama's participation had been in doubt since it became clear that the Dec. 7-18 conference was unlikely to produce a binding agreement. The original goal of the conference was to produce a new global climate change treaty to replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. But in recent weeks it became clear that delegates were likely to produce at best an outline for an agreement to be considered late next year.

The White House said Obama is expecting "robust mitigation contributions" from China and other emerging nations as part of any final agreement. He pressed for cooperation on climate change in meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing last week, and with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during a state visit at the White House Tuesday.

China said Thursday that Premier Wen Jiabao will take part in the Copenhagen summit.

And China's State Council pledged that the country will cut carbon dioxide emissions per unit of gross domestic product by 40 to 45 percent

by 2020, compared with levels in 2005. Given the expected huge increases in its economy over the next decade, China's global warming emissions should still increase - but at a much slower pace than if the nation had made no changes.

The White House said it will send a half-dozen Cabinet secretaries to the talks, including Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, as well as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, which is preparing regulations to cut greenhouse gases.

The high-profile delegation is intended to reinforce Obama's stance, despite the bitter debate in Congress. The House narrowly passed legislation requiring a cap on greenhouse gases from power plants and industry, but it's still unclear whether Senate Democrats will be able to muster the 60 votes needed to approve a similar bill.

Action in the Senate has been put off until next spring.

©2009 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Obama to plead US case at global warming summit (2009, November 26) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-11-obama-case-global-summit.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>
--