

Democratic senators set path on US energy bill

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Senate Democrats said Thursday they had come to an agreement on the framework of an energy bill sought by President Barack Obama to reduce US dependence on fossil fuels.

"We have no one saying no. We have everyone saying yes. It's a question of how we move forward," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid after a meeting of his party's members in the chamber.

"We need to pass clean [energy](#) legislation to secure not only our economic security but our national security."

The legislation, which has taken on a sense of urgency due to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, includes a secondary market for pollution rights nicknamed "cap and trade." It is backed by Obama but opposed by Republicans.

Democrats hope to bring the measure to a vote in July, before the summer recess for lawmakers. But Reid declined to set any dates.

"I'm committed to doing my very best to get this on the floor in the next work period, but you know, we're having to work through some issues here," he said.

"It's always that way. As you know, we don't get a lot of cooperation to help me plan the schedule from the other side."

Democratic Senator John Kerry and independent Senator Joe Lieberman introduced a measure in May aimed at reducing [greenhouse emissions](#), with a cap-and-trade system.

"Every single president since Richard Nixon has talked to Americans about energy independence but we have not reduced our dependence on foreign oil by one percent," said Kerry, adding that his measure would "save billions of dollars and make ourselves economically competitive."

Senator Jeff Bingaman, who heads the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, suggested a plan that focuses on energy use without the more controversial emissions targets.

Reid said that details of the bill are still open.

"There were a number of discussions today as to how we can arrive at what's best for the country, and of course pricing carbon is part of our discussion," he said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declined to go into detail about whether Democrats would aim for emission caps, saying "what we want... is to have a result.

"The job that the bill must do is have a result that we reduce our dependence on foreign oil as a national security issue; that we reduce our dependence on [fossil fuels](#), wherever they originate, as a health and environmental issue; that we proceed with innovation so that we can be number one," she said.

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