

Committee members urge Senate to pass ETS bill quickly

Four members of the US Cabinet have told the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee that the Senate should quickly pass a bill that would cap carbon emissions from a variety of economic sectors while making investments in renewable energy and efficiency. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar have testified before the committee responsible for drafting most of the bill. Chu says the science of climate change is settled and human activity is destabilising the climate in the way that is likely to threaten future generations. "Denial of the climate change problem will not change our destiny, a comprehensive energy and climate bill that caps and then reduces carbon emissions will," says Chu, who calls for a 40 per cent improvement in the energy efficiency of buildings, saying the action would curb energy use and emissions and cut consumer costs. "By developing a systemsintegrated approach, I believe we can eventually build buildings that use 80 per cent less energy with investments that pay for themselves in less than 15 years through reduced energy bills," he says. A cap on carbon emissions also would prompt investment in advanced battery technologies and more fuel-efficient vehicles, according to Chu. Salazar has focused on the renewable energy capacity of public lands in his testimony. "Since coming into office, we have prioritised the development of renewable energy on our public lands and our offshore waters," he says. Salazar says that without a limit on greenhouse gas emissions, renewable industries will still be at a disadvantage compared with more established industries like oil and gas. The cap will "trigger even more massive investment in new clean energy projects throughout the nation", he says. Jackson has compared the response to climate change to the space race of the 1950s and '60s. "America is behind," she says. In addition to addressing the climate change issue, she says that a cap on carbon would help wean the US economy off imported oil and develop alternative industries such as clean coal and safer nuclear energy technologies.

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