

## **House Committee continues work on climate change bill**

Democrats in the US House of Representatives say they are still working to pass a climate change bill by the end of the year. House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman says he is determined to “pass a bill by this year” and has imposed an end-of-May deadline for his committee to advance a bill. However House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer says there is “not a consensus at this time” on the issue, with House Republicans opposing any cap-and-trade legislation and instead calling for increased domestic energy production, encouraging conservation and promoting alternative fuels. Representative Fred Upton, the senior Republican on the House Energy and Commerce panel that will write the climate bill, says there are so many amendments that it could take up to two weeks for the panel to digest them. Although many businesses now support some kind of cap-and-trade scheme, House Republicans say the program would hurt the economy and consumers with higher energy prices. Waxman says legislation will address the problem. “We are trying to be mindful of the regional concerns and the ratepayers particularly, the consumers,” he says, adding that President Barack Obama “wants us to move as quickly as possible” on a bill. Democrats are also trying to negotiate whether to temporarily allocate industry some of the new emissions permits to help them through the transition period. Obama has indicated some flexibility on that issue, with his spokesman saying the President views energy reform as one of his top three policy proposals. “The president believes that consumers and communities should be compensated if during the transition period there are any additional costs associated with reducing carbon emissions,” he says. “He also believes regional impact should be taken into account and addressed, and that our trade-sensitive industries need to be protected.” The legislation is critical to the US position in international climate change talks due to take place in Copenhagen in December.

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