

Federal Climate and Energy Activities Weekly Roundup
November 16—November 18

Due to travel requirements associated with SGA's 75th anniversary celebration event in Warm Springs, Georgia, the Weekly Roundup for the week of November 16 only reflects events through November 18. Furthermore, the Weekly Roundup will be on hiatus until after Thanksgiving.

Update on Senate Climate Legislation:

After a November 16 meeting of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and 5 of the 6 Senate chairmen with jurisdiction over the climate change legislation, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman and climate bill sponsor John Kerry (D-MA) announced that the full Senate would delay consideration of the legislation until at least the Spring of 2010. The Senate will consider both health care reform and financial regulatory reform before it turns to climate change. Prior to this announcement, climate change was considered likely to follow the health care debate, but precede consideration of the financial regulatory overhaul legislation. In his remarks, Kerry pointed out that reforming the financial system will help establish the rules of the marketplace, which will be important for ensuring the public trust in the market that would be set up through a cap-and-trade bill. While Kerry still remained optimistic about the bill's prospects, the delay means that floor consideration could be complicated by election year politics.

President Obama and China President Hu Jintao Announce Joint Energy Measures

On a trip this week to China, President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao announced that the two countries will partner on a package of energy measures, the centerpiece of which would be a jointly funded clean energy research center. Other areas of cooperation will include collaboration on electric cars, shale gas usage, and carbon capture and sequestration projects. They also said they would work towards a "positive" outcome for the United Nations climate change summit in Copenhagen beginning December 7. However, it remains unlikely that agreement will be reached in Copenhagen for a binding emissions reduction treaty, and talks on how to replace the Kyoto Protocol upon its expiration in 2012 are nearly certain to continue into 2010.

Senate Energy Committee Considers International Climate Change Policy Issues

On November 17, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing focusing on international considerations of climate change, including the potential for meaningful international cooperation. Witnesses maintained that even though it is extremely unlikely that participants in the United Nations climate change summit in Copenhagen next month will agree to binding commitments for greenhouse gas reduction, that there is an opportunity to make progress at the summit. Specifically, nations could focus on the building blocks of a future agreement and how nations could measure, report and verify greenhouse gas reduction.

Senators Alexander and Webb Introduce Bill to Advance Nuclear and Other Clean Energy Sources

On November 16, Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and James Webb (D-VA) introduced legislation that would significantly expand the nation's nuclear power production capabilities and provide funding for other clean energy projects. The bill would increase the Department of

Energy's federal loan guarantee program, which could be used for nuclear plants as well as other carbon-free electricity initiatives. It would also fund five new "mini-Manhattan" projects focusing on: capture and storage of carbon dioxide from coal plants; advanced biofuels from non-crop sources; improvement of electric car batteries; affordability of solar power; and recycling of spent nuclear fuel. Webb, an important swing voter on climate change legislation, announced at the press briefing for his bill that in its current form, he is opposed to the Senate cap-and-trade legislation. Though he said that he remains "willing to listen."

New Legislation:

- On November 16, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced S. 2773. The bill would require the Secretary of Energy to carry out a program to support the research, demonstration, and development of commercial applications for offshore wind energy, and for other purposes. It was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.
- On November 16, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) introduced S. 2776. The bill would amend the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to create the right business environment for doubling production of clean nuclear energy and other clean energy and to create mini-Manhattan projects for clean energy research and development. It was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.
- On November 16, Representative Early Pomeroy (D-ND) introduced H.R. 4070. The bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the incentives for the production of biodiesel; to the Committee on Ways and Means.