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TEXT:

The bleeding continues. At today's Senate EPW hearing on Jeffords's multi-pollutant bill, Senators Graham, Lieberman, Wyden, and Chafee all said that the Bush Administration's Climate Action Report 2002 made it clear that regulating CO2 emissions must be included. By the way, Senator Voinovich did a great job, and Senator Bond's opening statement was good.

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4 CLIMATE CHANGE

Panels to probe policy implications from EPA report

J.L. Laws, Greenwire staff writer

(This story ran in this morning's Environment & Energy Daily
<<http://www.eenews.net/EEDaily/Backissues/061202d.htm>>.)

Two Senate panels -- the Environment and Public Works and the Commerce, Science and Transportation committees -- plan to hold hearings this summer exploring whether a climate change report the Bush administration sent to the United Nations late last month warrants changes in U.S. climate change policies.

The Climate Action 2002 Report, drafted by the U.S. EPA and other agencies and approved by the White House Council on Environmental Quality before the State Department submitted it to the United Nations, says human actions, namely burning fossil fuels, are largely to blame for rising global temperatures. The report said increasing temperatures would significantly alter the United States in the next few decades. But instead of offering a new policy to reverse the trend, the report suggests the United States will have to adapt to the changes, and it promotes President Bush's plan to reduce U.S. "carbon intensity," a measure of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to economic growth, through a voluntary program for American industries.

Last week, the White House vehemently denied press reports that Bush had distanced himself from the report, arguing the report doesn't contradict anything Bush has said publicly (Greenwire
<http://www.eenews.net/Greenwire/searcharchive/test_search-display.cgi?q=bush+epa+report&file=%2FGreenwire%2Fsearcharchive%2FNewsline%2F2002%2FJune6%2F06060206.htm>, June 6). Nevertheless, some interests -- especially environmental groups and congressional Democrats -- are using the report's strongly worded findings to accuse the administration of shrugging off serious threats posed by rising global temperatures by backing essentially "business as usual" policy prescriptions.

Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Democratic Reps. Jay Inslee (Wash.), George Miller (Calif.), Maurice Hinchey (N.Y.) and John Olver (Mass.) sent Bush a letter early last week asking him to clarify his comments on the report. The letter ticks off a list of six statements from the report, asking Bush to indicate which ones he disagrees with, if any. Agreeing with the statements would "paint a picture that requires much more

significant action than your administration has proposed to date," the members wrote, and called for a summit among Bush and the House and Senate leadership to forge a better climate change policy. The White House so far has not responded to the letter.

Besides Lieberman, other senators, including John Kerry (D-Mass.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.), have said the report's findings highlight the need for more aggressive action to curb GHG emissions than those being considered by the Bush administration. "Taken in their entirety, the [report's] findings constitute grounds for serious concern and clearly warrant a major reevaluation and adjustment of U.S. climate change policies," Lieberman wrote in a letter to Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) requesting a hearing. Jeffords' spokesman said the committee will hold a hearing on the matter in July.

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, of which Kerry and McCain are members, set aside time for a hearing on the report next week, but may have to wait a week or longer because key administration officials that committee leaders want to hear from will be out of town, aides said.

A Commerce Committee Democratic aide said the Bush White House has routinely chosen not to send political officials to past committee hearings on climate change. "The last hearing we had, they sent a scientist so they wouldn't have to talk about policy," the aide said. "Now that they have released a report that talks about policy, we want to hear from senior agency officials on policy."

Democratic leaders have argued Bush's climate policy is no different than business as usual but have had little luck countering it. For example, earlier this year, Senate Republicans and a coalition of Democrats representing states with automotive assembly or support plants easily stripped language from S. 517, the Senate energy bill, that would have increased federal fuel economy standards that were aimed in part at lowering GHG emissions in passenger cars and light trucks. Energy bill language that would have required major industries to report their GHG emissions was also watered down, keeping GHG reporting voluntary for at least five more years, at which time, if less than half of U.S. industrial GHG emissions are accounted for, the registry would become mandatory. Jeffords has had to postpone several attempts to mark up S. 556, a bill that would impose the toughest limits ever on power plant emissions of nitrous oxides, sulphur dioxide and mercury, and regulate carbon dioxide emissions for the first time, because a handful of committee Democrats have not taken clear positions on the bill. The committee is having another hearing on the bill today at the request of Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.).