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TEXT:

Senate Energy Bill Is Kyoto In Generic Packaging

By Paul M. Weyrich

CNSNews.com Commentary

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Conservatives have spent years battling to prevent our country from becoming part of the Kyoto Protocol, which would essentially force energy rationing on the American people.

Even though President Clinton signed the treaty in 1998, it has yet to be ratified by the United States Senate. It would be comforting to think that the treaty is really dead and buried for the next few years because the Bush administration is in power. But it stands a good chance of being resurrected in the energy bill currently being considered by the United States Senate.

The GOP has its own greens, and one of them is a Senate staffer who is said to be promoting Kyoto in all but name by fashioning this legislation. This Senate aide may soon turn up at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue as a staffer for the Council on Environmental Quality, advising President Bush on climate issues. But there is every reason to hope that the Senate Energy bill containing his handiwork never reaches President Bush's desk.

The Kyoto Protocol is not specifically mentioned in the Energy Bill, instead the measures that would set up the framework to implement the Kyoto bill are grouped together in a section innocuously called "Title XI."

These provisions would require a national strategy to "stabilize and over time reduce U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases" and the reestablishment of an office within the White House for a climate czar.

Creating such an office and position runs the very real danger of setting up a lobbying operation and national spokesperson for slow growth energy policies, each bearing the official stamp of the White House. The legislation also provides credits to big business for taking early action to reduce emissions, thus giving large corporations a carrot to buy into the plan.

This is exactly the kind of measure that conservatives would have expected to come from the Senate last year when Tom Daschle and the liberals were in charge. Or we could expect a measure like this to be promoted by a 'green' administration, particularly if either Senator John Kerry (D-MA) or Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) is elected president in 2004.

Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, who has been a



tireless fighter against the Kyoto Protocol, puts it this way:  
"Politically the climate title [of the Senate Energy Bill] looks like a Kerry or Lieberman campaign document."

There is a huge grassroots network out in the states that fought against Kyoto and it remains to be seen if it can be reactivated in time to force the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to strip these onerous provisions from the Energy Bill. If not, the bill will be sent to the Senate floor and, if passed, will wind up in conference.

That could give conservatives a good second opportunity to set this bill right. If it winds up on President Bush's desk with Title XI's measures, let us hope that he will veto it.

It's important to realize that more than just bad science is driving the advocates of the Kyoto Protocol.

Some of the biggest proponents of Kyoto have a vested interest in halting U.S. economic growth. The European Union, for instance, has placed plenty of strictures on their own countries when it comes to welfare and labor policies that brake the dynamism of their economies.

Slowing down our country's more vigorous economic growth is part of their own unstated strategy to ensure their economic competitiveness in the international marketplace. Third World countries have their eyes set on enticing industry from the United States to relocate. The emissions caps on industrial countries can help them to accomplish that goal.

One thing conservatives need to realize is that having the Republicans control the White House and the Congress does not mean the world has been made safe from liberalism. There are still plenty of liberal opportunists, even some working within the GOP, searching for opportunities to turn their ideas into official policy.

The wrangling over the Senate Energy Bill is just the most notable one at the moment, and it is one, given its far-reaching implications, that must be stopped. If conservatives can muster the strength to have the bill stripped of its generic brand Kyoto Protocol measures, then it will be an important win for conservatives that can help to ensure the integrity of our victories in 2000 and 2002 and keep our base united as an election year draws closer.

If not, it will certainly be bad for the economy of our country and force us to divert time and resources spent making things right on an issue we thought we had won in 2000 when Al Gore lost the presidency. We could use that time better advancing our own policies on other important issues.

I guess it just goes to show that "keep your guard up" is good advice even when we control the White House and Congress.

(Paul M. Weyrich is chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation.)

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