U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Monday, February 18, 2013

Table of Contents

SPECIALTY MEDIA CLIPS
Thursday, June 17, 2010

AFRICAN AMERICAN 2
Legally Green: Mandating a Cleaner Environment (*The Root*) 2
Climate bill doubtful, despite Obama Oval Office pitch (*The Grio*) 4
NATIVE AMERICAN 6
Tribes prepare for impacts of climate change (*Indian Country Today*) 6

AFRICAN AMERICAN

Legally Green: Mandating a Cleaner Environment (*The Root*)

By: Roger Witherspoon
Posted: April 16, 2010 at 12:41 AM
Going green isn't just some trendy catch-phrase for Whole Foods yuppies. Around the country, local governments are forcing corporations to clean up their acts.
Thirteen states from California to Rhode Island would like to impose strict emissions standards on new cars. Another 23 state legislatures would like to do away with the ubiquitous plastic grocery bags. Oregon has kicked a flame retardant out of children's pajamas; Wisconsin has banned another compound from toys for tots. Washington is taking copper out of auto brake pads, while Gainesville, Florida, is promoting the use of electricity from wind farms.

Across the country, state legislatures and city councils are adopting a wide range of measures aimed at improving the local and regional environment and reducing emissions that contribute to global climate change. This accelerating spate of green laws affecting both consumer and corporate behavior sometimes reflects peculiarly local needs and, at other times, provides the framework for national legislation dealing with air and water quality, or consumer protection.

In the area of chemicals in everyday usage, the recalls of several Chinese-made products spurred legislatures to develop their own chemical screening programs.

"The states are often moving ahead of the government," explained Scott Hendrick of the National Conference of State Legislatures. "If there is a perception that the federal government is not properly fulfilling its role of protecting the public, then the state goes ahead.

"That was the response to the recalls of toys in 2007 where there was a perception in state legislatures that the federal government wasn't protecting children and passed their own legislation. Those laws became the basis for the Federal Consumer Product Safety Act, which passed last year."

By the time the federal law passed, said Hendrick, 18 states had laws removing chemical phthalates from toys. The same principle holds for environmental issues far above ground.

"Most of the nation's federal air quality laws have some history in state clean air acts," said Adam Schafer, executive director of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. "As for climate change legislation, the states have been working on climate change policy for the past ten years.

"It's not new that the states are ahead of the federal government. The states see a role to act when the legislators feel that the federal government is not strong enough."

California, Schafer said, adopted exhaust emission standards for automobiles and businesses in 2007 and, since then, ten states have followed suit: "Those states are trying to figure out how to meet their reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and set up regulations and policies to reduce emissions."

Towards that goal, 13 states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region have joined in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which set up a cap-and-trade system for air pollution credits among utilities and businesses. Across the country, seven states and four Canadian provinces have joined in the Western Climate Initiative to set up a similar system, which includes power plants and the transportation sector. And the Midwest Governors' Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord is developing a similar framework for air quality improvements for Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Manitoba, Canada.

While Congress is still dithering on the ins and outs of a climate bill, several states have moved to require power companies to buy and use renewable energy. In most cases, that involves imposition of a "feed tariff," in which the utilities are required to buy back excess electricity generated from solar systems on residential and commercial property or to purchase wind power when it is available.

To help offset the high upfront costs of installing renewable energy systems, 18 states from Hawaii to Virginia passed Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), laws since 2009. These allow cities to issue bonds to underwrite residential and commercial installation of solar and other systems, with the costs paid back as part of the homeowners' annual tax assessment. The PACE system keeps the cost of these installations with the property, rather than following the homeowner as a personal debt if the house is sold.

Bowing to local interests, the definition of renewable energy has been stretched a bit. It includes "advanced nuclear power" in Ohio, and both gasified and waste coal in Pennsylvania.

In the area of water quality, for example, the US Environmental Protection Agency has wrestled since 2003 with the issue of aquatic pollution; roughly 550 power and heavy manufacturing plants nationwide use the water from rivers and bays to cool their equipment. The EPA estimates that these plants - led by nuclear facilities - kill upward of one trillion fish annually. The agency plans to release its guidelines for "once-through cooling" systems this summer.

New York State, however, decided not to wait. Last month, the state's Department of Environmental Conservation turned down a water permit for the Indian Point nuclear power plants. According to the state agency, the plant causes the death of about two billion fish annually when they are sucked into its massive heat exchanger, or when they

swim through the hot water that is dumped back into the river. The state has set guidelines for all of its major water users - which it found kill some 17 billion fish annually - and instructed them to stop using the rivers and bays, or shut down.

Cutting waste streams and reducing the amount of toxic and non-biodegradable products flowing to municipal and state landfills is a concern for many legislators. The $.05 fee on disposable paper and plastic bags at stores selling food or alcohol by the District of Columbia is in the same arena as fees imposed on returnable bottles in ten states. North Carolina's legislature banned the use of plastic carry-out bags in the state's fragile barrier island counties.

The latest area in landfill management involves electronic waste, whose complex systems often include heavy metals such as lead and mercury. "Several states have set up programs requiring manufacturers to take back their e-waste products when they are done," said Schafer. "It puts the burden of financing on the manufacturers, giving them a cradle-to-grave responsibility for their products."

Maine is one of the latest states to adopt e-waste legislation, requiring the makers of compact fluorescent light bulbs to set up collection programs to recover the mercury in those energy-efficient products.

For more information, see the Environmental Health Legislation Database of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Roger Witherspoon writes on environmental issues at www.RogerWitherspoon.com

Climate bill doubtful, despite Obama Oval Office pitch (*The Grio*)

By theGrio
4:38 PM on 06/16/2010
MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) -- A climate and energy bill being pushed in the U.S. Senate faces bleak prospects, despite President Barack Obama's call for a "clean energy" future that lessens dependence on oil and other fossil fuels.

A day after the president's Oval Office speech, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican, reiterated that his party remains unanimous in its opposition to what he called a national energy tax.

Even one of the bill's likely supporters said the measure does not have enough votes to pass.

"You know, it would take 60 votes in the Senate to do that," said Sen. Byron Dorgan, a Democrat. "I doubt very much whether those 60 votes exist right now." Sixty votes are needed to advance legislation in the 100-member chamber.

In an appearance Wednesday on Fox News, McConnell said Obama and congressional Democrats were "holding the Gulf hostage to a national energy tax" they have long been seeking.

WATCH DYLAN RATIGAN COVERAGE OF OBAMA, CONGRESS AND ENERGY
Visit msnbc.com for breaking news, world news, and news about the economy
"They call it a climate bill. What it is is a national energy tax," McConnell said.

The climate bill, sponsored by Sens. John Kerry, a Democrat, and Joe Lieberman, an independent, would tax carbon dioxide emissions produced by coal-fired power plants and other large polluters, as a way to reduce pollution blamed for global warming. Dubbed the American Power Act, the measure aims to cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases by 17 percent by 2020 and by more than 80 percent by 2050.

The bill would cost American households an average of $79 to $146 per year, the Environmental Protection Agency said in an analysis this week.

Some liberal commentators and environmental groups criticized Obama for failing to endorse a cap on carbon emissions in his speech Tuesday night.

White House spokesman Ben LaBolt said Obama's speech reiterated his call for comprehensive energy and climate legislation to break the nation's dependence on fossil fuels. The president will be reaching out next week to senators on both sides of the aisle to chart a path forward, LaBolt said.

"We're open to good ideas from all sources and will be working with senators on a comprehensive proposal," LaBolt said Wednesday. "The tragedy in the Gulf underscores the need to move quickly, and the president is committed to finding the votes for comprehensive energy legislation this year."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid emphasized that he will need Republican support for the legislation, which Democrats hope to bring to the Senate floor next month.

"This legislation can only be passed if Republicans decide to work with us and demonstrate that they share our serious commitment to building a 21st-century energy strategy for America," Reid said in a statement.

Those votes may not be easy to find. The bill's sole Republican backer, Sen. Lindsey Graham, withdrew his support last month, saying it is impossible to pass the legislation in the current political climate.

An indication of the bill's prospects came Tuesday as the Senate killed an attempt to repeal lucrative tax breaks enjoyed by the oil and gas industry.

The move by Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent, would have raised $35 billion over 10 years by limiting the ability of oil companies to write off drilling expenses and eliminating other tax deductions for domestic production of oil and gas.

Despite the industry's current political problems caused by the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the measure was defeated 61-35. Twenty-one Democrats joined 39 Republicans in opposing the measure. Among those voting no was Lieberman, the co-sponsor of the climate bill.

NATIVE AMERICAN

Tribes prepare for impacts of climate change (*Indian Country Today*)

"Let's clear up some misconceptions about global climate change," Lara Whitely Binder, of the Climate Impacts Group, told tribal representatives gathered at a climate change adaptation training course.

Take weather versus climate.

Weather refers to day-to-day changes like temperature and precipitation in specific locations. Climate refers to the average of these variables over long time periods. Individual weather events do not prove, or disprove, climate change.

Earth's climate is changing as a result of human practices – that fact is no longer in dispute. "We are not going to avoid the impacts," emphasized Binder.

It will impact – and in some areas already is – the ecosystems of tribal communities who have relied on the bounty of land and sea for centuries to sustain them.

Their forests, rangelands, oceans, freshwater, agriculture, weather; even life itself.

Binder's remarks kicked off the May 18 – 20 event at the Quinault Beach Resort in Ocean Shores, Wash., sponsored by the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals at Northern Arizona University in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Established in 1992, ITEP assists Indian tribes in management of their environmental resources through training and education.

Eighteen tribal representatives from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California and Maine were there to learn the how and why, and goals of adapting to climate change and ways to develop more climate resilient organizations, communities, economies and ecosystems.

Oil in open Gulf of Mexico waters set afire.

Binder outlined the fundamentals of adaptation.

Of the two ways to deal with climate change, mitigation reduces the levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere by reducing greenhouse gas emissions or by enhancing carbon sinks, which absorb more greenhouse gases than they emit. Adaptation is taking actions that minimize the impacts to people, communities and ecosystems of actual or anticipated climate change.

"Environmentalists didn't like the notion of adaptation because it meant we wouldn't work on stopping emissions," Binder said. "The skeptics didn't like it because it meant climate change exists."

But some degree of climate disruption will occur regardless of future greenhouse gas emissions. Adapting to or coping with climate change will be necessary in certain regions and for certain socioeconomic and environmental systems.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 defined adaptation as the "adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities."

Growing populations in areas vulnerable to extreme events may increase the need for adaptation. However, according to the IPCC, "adaptation alone is not expected to cope with all the projected effects of climate change, and especially not over the long term as most impacts increase in magnitude."

Put more simply, adaptation is taking action to minimize the impacts of actual or expected climate change. It is reducing the vulnerability of people and places to the effects of climate change. It is also embracing positive consequences of climate change.

There is anticipatory adaptation, or taking proactive steps to reduce climate change risks for individuals, communities, and ecosystems, and reactive adaptation, dealing with climate impacts after the fact.

Reactive adaptation alone may be "too little too late," such as in the case of the loss of species. It may cost more than anticipatory adaptation, and it runs the risk of being short-sighted by focusing on the crisis at hand.

With a compelling Power Point presentation, Binder outlined what steps tribes need to take to implement adaptation measures. Keith Rose, EPA Region 10, discussed adaptation strategies and planning. Bob Hall, EPA Region 9, identified ecosystems that are affected by climate change.

Three tribal case studies, all located in western Washington, were presented by Larry Workman of the Quinault Nation, "Climate Change Impacts on the Quinault Indian Nation;" Bob Smith of the Hoh Tribe, "The Hoh Tribe-Moving A Community;" and Ed Knight of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, "Swinomish Climate Change Initiative."

“Tribes are on the forefront of climate change, in respect to both degree of impacts and in initial efforts to respond to adaptation,” said Knight, senior planner and project coordinator.

As the Swinomish foresaw the destructive potential of climate change in 2008 their planners researched and completed a 90-page “Swinomish Climate Change Initiative Impact Assessment Technical Report,” which provides a comprehensive assessment of potential climate change effects, risk and vulnerability on Swinomish community, lands, and resources. The tribe is already moving aggressively with response and adaptation planning.

For upcoming ITEP climate change training courses for tribal professionals visit www4.nau.edu/itep.

ITEP’s Tribes & Climate Change Web site – www4.nau.edu/tribalclimatechange – includes information about climate change, impacts on tribes, audio files of elders, numerous resources and more.

To receive ITEP’s monthly Tribal Climate Change Newsletter with news items, resources, announcements about funding opportunities, conferences, training, and information relevant to tribal climate change issues, or to learn more about ITEP’s climate change efforts e-mail Sue Wotkyns, ITEP’s climate change program manager, at Susan.Wotkyns@nau.edu.