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**Statement from the Mike Tidwell, Executive Director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network concerning the American Clean Energy and Security Act**

“Barely four months ago, President Obama laid out a framework to fight global warming that was simple, fair, and built to last. All polluters would pay for greenhouse gas emissions, the President said. No exceptions. The money gathered from polluters would then be rebated to middle- and lower-income Americans while leaving \$15 billion per year for investments in clean energy and green jobs.

“Unfortunately, thanks to ferocious lobbying from the coal, oil, and agricultural interests, Congress will vote today on a bill that does not come close to matching the original Obama framework. The American Clean Energy and Security Act is complicated (1,200 pages), unfair (gives most permits to polluters for free), and is destined to be overhauled in coming years (by not keeping pace with the physics of runaway global warming).

“The Chesapeake Climate Action Network believes much more is needed than what is presently included in the Waxman-Markey bill. At a minimum, three floor amendments are needed. 1) Restore the U.S. EPA’s power to regulate coal plants; 2) Strengthen the clean energy production targets; and 3) Improve the overall greenhouse gas reduction target to better match what scientists say is needed.

“But even these changes do not fully address the bill’s two biggest problems: insufficient consumer protection and the unbridled use of so-called carbon “offsets.” Allowing polluters to pay for claims of carbon reductions elsewhere – from farmers, forest managers, etc., worldwide – creates enormous problems of scale and verification. As the U.S. Senate prepares to take up this bill, the offsets must be cut far below the current 2 billion tons per year, and the U.S. EPA -- not the U.S. Department of Agriculture -- should be in charge of regulating the process. Otherwise the House version of the bill could open the door for disastrous new coal plants that simply pay farmers to plant genetically-engineered crops on newly disturbed land for carbon reductions that simply never happen.

“As this bill moves forward, the Senate must also dramatically improve consumer protection. President Obama in February proposed rebating 85 percent of the pollution permit funds directly to taxpayers. The Waxman-Markey bill directly rebates only 15 percent of the money. Another 30 percent is given to electric utilities who promise to use the money to “protect” consumers. This recipe will invariably lead to disagreements that land in court where over-matched consumer advocacy groups will face polluters with ample legal funds and lawyers.

“We need to return to “simple, fair, and built to last.” All polluters pay. Consumers are protected through direct rebates. And real investments are made in green energy.

“This will only happen if President Obama stands up for his original principles. He can no longer lead from the rear, simply calling on Congress to figure out a plan and send him a climate bill. The President must lead from the front, demanding the Senate do better. Without vast improvements in the Senate, Obama and the United States will fail to meet our moral responsibility to join the international community in negotiating a new global climate treaty later this year in Copenhagen, Denmark. Weak legislation from Congress will encourage other nations to commit to equally weak targets, thus derailing a clean-energy revolution and dooming the planet to climate chaos.

“Recent polling shows that an overwhelming 75 percent of American voters support U.S. action to curb greenhouse gas pollution. The Waxman-Markey bill, rendered complex and unfair by the fossil fuel and agriculture lobby, does not reflect the exceptional good will and determination of the American people to do better. The planet needs more from Congress. The American people deserve more.”

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