

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Environment America: New Draft Climate Bill Takes Critical Steps Forward, But Must Do More to Get America Off Oil

"American Power Act" Draft Sets Meaningful Goals, But Promotes More Drilling and Leaves Energy Efficiency Solutions Untapped

Washington, DC—Today Senators John Kerry and Joe Lieberman released a new discussion draft for comprehensive federal climate and energy legislation, entitled “The American Power Act.” Environment America Federal Global Warming Program Director Emily Figdor released the following statement in response:

“Global warming is the problem of our generation; launching a clean energy revolution is our opportunity. We must act quickly and boldly to stave off the worst effects of global warming, such as a massive sea level rise that would inundate coastal areas. Furthermore, the current BP oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico—where more than 200,000 gallons of oil per day are bubbling up through waters inhabited by hundreds of fish, marine mammals and bird species—makes it more clear than ever before that we need to shift away from dirty fossil fuels and toward a clean energy economy. Thankfully, energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy like wind and solar power can help solve global warming while rebuilding our economy with new industries and millions of local jobs.

“We applaud Senators Kerry and Lieberman for working to address these urgent issues, and we urge Senate Majority Leader Reid and President Obama to help ensure that Congress finishes the job. Environment America looks forward to working with the Senate and the White House to pass a comprehensive bill that moves us toward the clean energy future the nation needs.

“The discussion draft does several critical things to help realize this clean energy future. Most notably, the draft includes limits on global warming pollution that aim to cut pollution 17 percent by 2020 nationally and 83 percent by 2050. Meaningful limits on emissions are essential to building our clean energy economy and achieving significant reductions in global warming pollution. While more will need to be done to meet the reductions science says is necessary this represents a key step forward. The bill also

contains measures to help move America away from oil, including increased investment in efficient transportation options.

“However, we also have serious concerns with sections of the discussion draft, and we are anxious to work with Senators Kerry and Lieberman, as well as Senate Majority Leader Reid and President Obama, to address these concerns and make this the strongest possible bill.

“Specifically, our first concern is that the draft includes language that encourages more drilling off America’s coasts by awarding oil revenues to states that allow drilling off their shores. As the unprecedented disaster in the Gulf of Mexico shows, we need to be limiting the dirty practice of offshore oil drilling—not encouraging more of it.

“We also are disappointed that the draft would block states from enacting their own cap-and-trade programs and curtails EPA authority to deal with new coal plants, especially if the federal program is found to be ineffective in future years. On the heels of [research by Environment America](#) showing that state-led action on energy and global warming will cut pollution by more than 535 million metric tons by 2020—which is more than the annual emissions from all but eight of the world’s countries—it is imperative that states have the freedom to continue to innovate, especially in the event that the federal program fails to meet its goals in future years.

“We know that energy efficiency is the cheapest, cleanest and safest way to build our clean energy economy and cut global warming pollution, but the discussion draft does not do nearly enough to advance energy efficiency efforts, leaving significant numbers of jobs, real pollution reductions and cost savings on the table. More must be done to fully realize the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy, and to reduce our dependence on oil and other polluting dangerous fossil fuels.

“Finally, Environment America does not believe that nuclear power is needed to tackle global warming—and in fact may hold back our efforts to build a clean energy economy—thus we oppose huge new investments in nuclear power and especially language in the draft which would streamline the licensing process for new nuclear power plants. Given the danger and expense of building new nuclear power plants, all existing permitting safeguards should be maintained, not weakened.

“We look forward to carefully reviewing all of the details of the bill. Environment America again applauds the work of Senators Kerry and Lieberman on this historic effort, and we look forward to working with them and Senator Majority Leader Reid and President Obama to ensure that Congress passes legislation which tackles global warming while growing our clean energy economy.”

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Environment America is a federation of 28 state environmental groups working for a greener, healthier future. www.environmentamerica.org