

Greenpeace Statement on E&C Discussion Draft

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 31, 2009

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Washington--The House Energy and Commerce Committee today released a discussion draft of comprehensive energy and climate legislation. Below is the statement of Greenpeace US Global Warming Campaign Director Steven Biel:

After more than a decade of denial and delay by U.S. leaders, Chairmen Waxman and Markey have placed clean energy and global warming at the very top of Congress's agenda as the world looks to the United States for leadership in the run-up to Copenhagen. The draft bill is a good first step in the right direction, but the bill must be strengthened to ensure that it will achieve the goals of transitioning to a clean energy economy and solving global warming.

America's economy and climate are in crisis. From Gulf coast homeowners bracing for increasingly intense hurricanes to communities across the country facing water shortages and wildfires, Americans are seeing first hand what global warming looks like. The good news is that the solution to our economic crisis and the climate crisis go hand-in-hand. We must achieve energy independence with clean energy, which will create millions of new jobs, save trillions in fuel costs, and prevent the economic devastation we face if global warming goes unchecked.

Among the bill's highlights:

-Science-based global warming pollution reduction targets. The Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds that, to limit warming to 2 degrees, developed nations must achieve emissions cuts of 25-40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80-95 percent by 2050. The bill represents the first legislative effort ever that embraces these science-based emissions reductions goals, though loopholes included in the bill raise doubts about its ability to achieve them.

-Renewable electricity standard requiring 25 percent of electricity be generated from clean sources by 2025. Such a ramp-up of renewable energy is a prerequisite to meeting science-based emissions reductions while reaping the full economic benefits of clean energy.

-A broad program of energy efficiency standards and investments. The bill recognizes that energy efficiency is the fastest, most effective way to spark economic growth and achieve pollution reductions. The bill would achieve efficiency improvements across the transportation sector while dramatically improving the efficiency of homes and businesses across the country.

-The bill sets aside robust funding to stop international deforestation, which is responsible for 20 percent of global carbon emissions.

-Cap on emissions of F-gases. These pollutants, with global warming potential hundreds to thousands of times greater than carbon dioxide, can be and must be replaced with safer alternatives. The bill would be an important step towards a phase-out of these dangerous global warming pollutants.

Key short-comings that must be addressed include:

-Two billion tons of pollution offsets, a virtually unlimited amount equal to a quarter of all U.S. emissions. If all the offsets in the bill were used, the bill's emissions reductions could be met without any reduction in fossil fuel emissions for more than 20 years. We cannot solve global warming by simply planting trees and continuing to pollute forever.

-The coal industry receives untold billions dollar in handouts for the false promise of carbon capture and sequestration, with American ratepayers and taxpayers footing the bill.

Finally, the discussion draft is largely silent on how auction revenue will be used. We urge the committee to dedicate this revenue to the short-term up-front investments needed to transition to a clean energy economy, including investments in clean energy development domestically and in the developing world as well as adaptation efforts for countries and communities most directly affected by climate change.