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## Senate to present version of energy and climate bill

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By: [Lisa Call](#), The Dickinson Press

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Amid a nationwide push for cleaner energy, the U.S. Senate is slated to review today what some consider the biggest piece of environmental legislation in the last 20 years, and a few North Dakota groups and political leaders have mixed opinions.

In June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act, and today, the Boxer-Kerry Climate Change Bill, sponsored by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. and Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., will be presented to the Senate.

While the House bill focused on capping and regulating carbon dioxide emissions, instilling renewable electricity requirements, as well as setting aside funding for protecting wildlife and natural resources from climate change, the Senate bill will have some changes.

Conservation and recreation groups, as well as five sportsmen from North Dakota, signed a letter this week along with 600 nationwide organizations, urging the Senate to pass climate and energy legislation.

However, one key player in North Dakota politics, Democratic Rep. Earl Pomeroy, voted against the bill during the June House session.

"The bill is probably the most sweeping environmental bill ever considered by Congress ... a massive legislative proposal relative to carbon emissions," Pomeroy said.

When considering his vote, Pomeroy said he concluded the bill would raise electricity rates "unacceptably high," which caused him to vote against the bill.

While the Congressional Budget Office estimates a taxpayer increase of \$175 per year, Pomeroy disagrees.

"National averages can be deceptive or meaningless," he said. "In North Dakota, it would be much higher than that because we have coal-based electricity. The national average does not reflect what happens in individual regions."

Pomeroy said 95 percent of North Dakota's power is coal-generated.

"I felt like the targets for (carbon dioxide) reduction in the bill were unrealistic," Pomeroy said. "Much of the technology has not been demonstrated to be viable on a commercial scale at this time."

Another North Dakota political figure, Democratic Sen. Byron Dorgan, said while he supports capping carbon emissions, it needs to be done in an achievable manner.

"It has to be done the right way with targets and timelines that allow us to accomplish our goals without driving the cost of energy for homeowners and businesses out of sight," Dorgan said in an opinion editorial e-mail. "The cap and trade plan does not meet that test for me."

Most supporting groups agree that in order to realistically tackle existing and future impacts on environments and their wildlife, the Senate needs to dedicate about 5 percent of total climate bill allowances, according to National Wildlife Federation press release.

The house bill designated one percent of funding for natural resources and conservation and as the years pass, the percentage would increase.

The letter signed by more than 600 organizations requested 5 percent.

Derek Brockbank, climate safeguards manager for the National Wildlife Federation, said after the House bill passed, agencies were able to estimate how much each state would receive in revenue from the bill if it went into effect.

"In the first year of the program, North Dakota would see about \$1.7 million to the fish and wildlife agency,"

Brockbank said it is estimated the first 20 years of the program would bring an average of about \$5.4 million per year to North Dakota's state fish and wildlife agencies.

Jan Swenson, executive director of the Bismarck-based Badlands Conservation Alliance, an organization who signed the letter of support and concentrates on western North Dakota conservation, said one of the reasons they signed was because the bill is "proactive."

"It's thinking in terms of what's coming and in terms of adaptations needed," Swenson said.

When it comes to resource management, Swenson said monitoring is key, but is often underfunded.

"There are issues always in the Little Missouri National Grasslands, as well as the park, that would be more clearly defined if the funding for monitoring was there," Swenson said.

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