

Washington Watch

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This month, Kevin Vranes at the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research in Boulder, Colorado, reviews recent climate legislation passing through US Congress.

Legislation addressing climate change and energy issues is starting to move through the Senate and House of Representatives. More than 20 bills have been introduced in both chambers, committees have been busy holding hearings, and three new bills on power plant emissions are expected to be introduced in the Senate soon.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources passed a four-bill package on 2 May to address biofuels, energy efficiency, and carbon capture, sequestration and storage (CSS). Although the bills passed committee on a 20–3 vote, partisan wrangling over a proposed mandate for coal-derived liquefied fuels (also called ‘synfuels’) hinted that passing broad legislation to address climate and energy issues will be politically difficult. The measures now await action by the full Senate.



The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has held six climate-related hearings since the session began in January, including an appearance by former Vice President Al Gore on 21 March. Gore gave legislators a list of ten immediate steps to be taken to address global warming, including instituting a carbon tax and

creating a federally-backed mortgage instrument used for energy efficiency improvements in residential homes.

House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi created an *ad hoc* select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming in January, and has made frequent statements that the House will introduce a broad climate bill by July 4. The White House has continued to insist on voluntary measures to address greenhouse gases, but lost a major Supreme Court decision on 2 April. In *Massachusetts et al. versus the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) et al.*, the EPA argued that it had no authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate carbon dioxide emissions. The justices rejected the EPA’s arguments, finding that, “EPA’s steadfast refusal to regulate greenhouse gas emissions presents a risk of harm to Massachusetts that is both ‘actual’ and ‘imminent’”.



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