



John Villyard, CEO

San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

In December, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), announced that six key greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), are endangering public health and welfare.

In reference to this finding, Glenn English, CEO of National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) said, "This action puts a 'foot in the door' for EPA to promulgate sweeping new regulations that could impose strict limits on carbon emissions from power plants, driving up electric bills." He added, "The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with

carbon, and it would be awkward at best and probably a disaster at worst."

Electric co-ops believe that controls on carbon dioxide should be established by Congress, where the impact of these proposals can have a full public debate. Unfortunately, a climate change bill passed by the U.S. House last summer (H.R. 2454) and another reported by the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in November (S. 1733) include unachievable goals and timelines for CO₂ emission reductions. Additionally, the bills do not include adequate technology development incentives or guarantees that electric bills will remain affordable. Current proposals will unfairly penalize consumers in fossil fuel-dependant states, like Colorado, by saddling them with higher bills to subsidize and lower electric bills for those in other regions.

What's more, Senate leaders have admitted that climate

Congress May Delay

change legislation has stalled. We are hearing that legislation may not be picked up this year because many Senators will be up for reelection in 2010. They want to wait until 2011 after elections are completed before touching this hot potato.

The legislative hold-up makes it important for consumers to pay careful attention to EPA's efforts. The concern is that with CO₂ emissions from vehicles falling under federal Clean Air Act regulation, other emitters of carbon dioxide—fossil fuel-fired power plants included—may also soon be subject to EPA oversight.

Instead of EPA oversight, utilities want to see climate change legislation that protects consumers and preempts use of the federal Clean Air Act and other existing laws. Co-ops don't want the task of trying to comply with more than one set of regulations—especially when these regulations were not designed to address

the issues we face today.

"Regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant will occur with or without congressional input," English said. "But Congress must not simply add new legislation on top of old regulations. Any climate change bill should become the roadmap—the single strategy—for reducing carbon dioxide emissions at federal, state, and local levels."

Electric co-ops want to see climate change policy goals that are fair, affordable, and achievable. We believe revenue generated by legislation should be used to advance technology and create long-term solutions.

I encourage you to make your voice heard on this important issue. Visit NRECA's Our Energy, Our Future™ campaign at www.ourenergy.coop today!

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