

Is Support For Cap-And-Trade Waning?

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On NationalJournal.com's [Energy & Environment Expert Blog](#) this week, environmental groups such as the Natural Resources Defense Council and Sierra Club continued to press for comprehensive climate change legislation this year. But one -- Republican for Environmental Protection President **Robert Sisson** -- said the debate needs an overhaul if Congress is going to pass such a bill.

Conservative talk radio, he writes, has so far triumphed over climate legislation supporters. "Advocates for climate protection have failed to challenge the talking heads who have framed the issue for tens of millions of listeners," he wrote. Sisson went on argue that many climate policies -- chief among them the proposed cap-and-trade system -- are based in conservative policies. "Call your senators and tell them to vote 'yes' on cap and trade. That's what Reagan would do," Sisson concludes.

But **Margo Thorning**, chief economist at the American Council for Capital Formation, says Congress and the administration should go back to the drawing board. She predicts cap-and-trade won't attract enough votes and suggests **President Obama** "abandon his push for cap and trade and instead turn to truly global solutions."

Bill Snape, senior counsel at the left-leaning Center For Biological Diversity, [suggests](#) Congress "back off 1,000 page bills with cap and trade schemes that only Wall Street and wonks understand." From the other side of the debate, **William O'Keefe**, CEO of the George C. Marshall Institute, [argues](#) that cap-and-trade "will enrich traders and rent seeking businesses, [and] further increase the heavy hand of regulation with the burdens and consequences of higher energy costs being [borne] by the public."

A more palatable option might be a carbon tax, [offers](#) **Robert Shapiro**, who has advised **Bill Clinton**, **Al Gore** and **John Kerry**. "If cap-and-trade can't attract the votes, that suggests we'll hear more this year about a revenue-neutral, carbon-based tax," writes Shapiro, who is now chairman of the consulting firm Sonecon.

But leaders of several environmental advocacy organizations are still optimistic that Congress will pass some form of comprehensive climate change legislation this year. League of Conservation Voters President [Gene Karpinski](#), American Wind Energy Association CEO [Denise Bode](#), National Wildlife Foundation President [Larry Schweiger](#), and Center For American Progress climate strategy director [Daniel J. Weiss](#) all cited various signs of progress, such as the bipartisan efforts by Kerry and Sens. **Joe Lieberman**, I/D-Conn., and **Lindsey Graham**, R-S.C., and the climate bill introduced last month by Sens. **Maria Cantwell**, D-Wash., and **Susan Collins**, R-Maine.

"After a decade of dead-end energy policies, doing nothing is not an option in 2010," Karpinski writes. "Make no mistake, momentum towards comprehensive clean energy and climate legislation continues to build. Based on all that has been accomplished in the past year, we're very optimistic about its chances this year."