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Federal

Democrats Push White House on Climate Plan

On August 6th, the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change [Congressmen Waxman (D-CA), Rush (D-IL) Blumenauer (D-WA) and Senators Whitehouse (D-RI), Markey (D-MA), and Cardin (D-MD)] released a [white paper](#) recommending 20 steps the Department of Energy (DOE) should take in carrying out the [President's Climate Action Plan](#).

The recommendations include strengthening specific energy efficiency standards, accelerating the development and deployment of low-carbon energy technologies, expanding the use of energy savings performance contracts to save energy at federal facilities, encouraging reforms in state building codes and utility rate structures, maximizing the contribution of power marketing administrations, and analyzing the climate change impacts of liquefied natural gas exports.

In the absence of any legislative action on climate policy, the Task Force is attempting to push the White House to act via Executive Order or administrative rule making. The group's press release can be found [here](#).

House Energy and Commerce Committee Announces First Climate Hearing

During the Congressional August recess, House Energy and Power Subcommittee Chairman Ed Whitfield (R-KY), announced a September 18th hearing to examine the President's [Climate Action Plan](#). The Subcommittee has sent letters to 13 agencies, requesting witnesses for the hearing. Agencies asked to

testify include the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Export-Import Bank, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The request to testify contains a series of questions, such as identification of current climate-related activities and the amount of funding each agency can attribute to climate efforts since 2005.

The Committee press release can be found [here](#).

States Engage in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Rulemaking

The most significant component of President Obama's Climate Action Plan is the deadline to create pollution standards for existing and new power plants. As the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) works to draft these rules, states are beginning to weigh in.

According to a [letter](#) from the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA), state and local air agencies want to be directly involved in the rule-writing process. Specifically, NACAA would like to see a system of credits for states that have already invested in renewable energy and efficiency. States also prefer the ability to implement their own plans if they are comparable or greater than the EPA's emissions reduction goals.

The current Co-President of the NACAA is David Shaw, the Director of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

DOE Announces Energy Advisory Board Members

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has unveiled the members of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB). The independent committee is intended to advise Secretary Ernest Moniz. Appointees of the 19 member advisory board include the following:

- **Frances Beinecke**, President, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
- **John Deutch**, MIT Chemist and Former Under Secretary of Energy
- **Shirley Ann Jackson**, President, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)
- **Paul Juskow**, President, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and MIT Professor of Economics, Emeritus
- **Steve Koonin**, Director, Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP), New York University and Former Under Secretary for Science
- **Michael McQuade**, Senior Vice President for Science and Technology, United Technologies Corporation
- **John Podesta**, Chair, Center for American Progress and Former White House Chief of Staff
- **Ram Shenoy**, Chief Technology Officer, ConocoPhillips
- **Daniel Yergin**, Vice Chairman, IHS and Founder of IHS Cambridge Energy Research Associates

The full announcement can be found [here](#).

Hundreds of Thousands Submit Comments on Fracking Rule for Federal Lands

Nearly one million comments were submitted to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on its proposed hydraulic fracturing rule. Although states currently regulate fracturing (a process to extract oil and natural gas - also known as “fracking”) on any land within their borders, the BLM proposal would give the federal government regulatory authority over fracking on federal lands if the state or Indian tribal regulations do not meet or exceed federal standards.

The proposed rule focuses on well testing, disclosure of chemicals and tracking water and wastewater disposal. The BLM anticipates releasing a final rule sometime this year.

The proposed rule can be found [here](#).

State

NYS Senate to Hold Hearings on Tax Reform

The New York State Senate Committee on Finance will hold a series of public hearings throughout New York State to examine ways in which New York’s tax policies can be revised to reduce the burden on taxpayers and help businesses create jobs.

“From the testimony at these hearing, we will develop tax reform proposals that have a realistic chance of becoming state policy,” said Finance Chairman Senator DeFrancisco (R-Syracuse). The proposals will subsequently be presented to the Governor for him to consider in the 2014-2015 Executive Budget proposal.

The first hearing will take place in Albany on September 4th and will feature testimony from business organizations such as the Business Council of New York State, the New York State Economic Development Council, the Manhattan Institute, and the Farm Bureau. Local businesses and organizations will testify at the remaining hearings.

Additional hearings will be held as follows:

- Syracuse: September 5th
- Buffalo: September 12th
- Nassau County: October 3rd
- Manhattan: October 4th

Senate Majority Coalition to Hold Public Forums on Regulatory Reform

The Senate Majority Coalition will hold a series of industry-specific public forums on regulatory reform. The forums will focus on the following sectors: medical technology/health; agriculture; manufacturing; construction; insurance; banking/financial services; small business; hospitality/tourism; and biotechnology.

Each of the ten public forums will feature testimony from businesses and local officials to help determine which rules, regulations, and mandates are the most “useless, costly, and should be eliminated”. According to the press release, the forums are part of the coalition’s bipartisan effort to identify and eliminate the most costly government regulations that “strangle business and job growth and drive up local taxes”.

The forum dates and locations are as follows:

- September 11th Buffalo Medical Technology/Health
- September 19th Watertown Agriculture
- September 20th Syracuse Manufacturing
- September 25th Long Island Construction
- September 26th New York City Insurance/Banking/Financial Services
- September 27th Hudson Valley Small Business
- October 2nd Saratoga Hospitality/Tourism
- October 9th Corning Manufacturing
- October 15th Rochester Biotechnology

New Environmental Bond Act Introduced

Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Mark Grisanti (R-Buffalo) recently introduced a new Environmental Bond Act – titled the Clean Water/Clean Air/Green Jobs Bond Act of 2014 - which would enable New York State to borrow \$5 billion for the “preservation, enhancement, restoration and improvement of the state’s environment”.

The money would be made available for projects relating to climate change adaptation, improving the quality of drinking water, the purchase of open space and farmland preservation, as well as habitat restoration. Specifically, \$2 billion would be dedicated to protect water resources such as flood mitigation efforts and water quality research; \$2 billion would be allocated to municipal wastewater infrastructure upgrades; and \$1 billion would be dedicated to air quality programs including pollution mitigation efforts in urban areas, community gardens, and brownfield redevelopment.

The legislation is intended to fill the void left when the 1996 Clean Water, Clean Air Bond Act ran out of money. According to the sponsor’ memo, a 2008 study found that an additional \$80 billion would be required over a 20-year period to repair or replace wastewater and water systems throughout New York. However, the current need likely exceeds that figure as the assessment was produced prior to the devastation caused by recent extreme weather events like Irene and Sandy.

Similar to the 1996 legislation, if the Legislature approves the bill, it will then be subject to a public referendum to be held in November 2014.

The Assembly is scheduled to hold a public hearing on September 6th to review the Department of Environmental Conservation’s implementation of the 2013-2014 Enacted Budget. At that time it will also review the need for a new Environmental Bond Act.

The bill text and sponsor’s memo can be found [here](#).

Environmental Justice Grants Awarded Statewide

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently awarded more than \$1 million in environmental justice grants to community-based projects that address environmental and/or public health concerns. The funds will be used for alternative energy projects, inventories of polluting facilities, air monitoring, urban tree planting, and community gardens. Organizations located in New York City received the majority of the funding for a variety of projects ranging from flood mitigation to agriculture programs to water quality initiatives.

The Environmental Justice Grants program has a particular focus on low-income and minority communities that have historically been burdened by environmental problems. The environmental issues include having a large number of regulated facilities or contaminated sites, noise, air and water pollution, health problems, and lack of green space and waterfront access.

A complete list of awards can be found [here](#).

City

Mayor Discusses Initiatives to Make NYC's Waterfront More Resilient

Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently announced that major progress had been made on several initiatives that will make New York City's waterfront area more resilient than ever.

He highlighted a number of initiatives that are ongoing to help restore the coastline and protect and prepare the city for future risks associated with climate change.

In the next couple months the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will pump approximately 3.5 million cubic yards of sand to Rockaway Beach. A first phase of 600,000 cubic yards is currently being pumped to the beach. Plans include building a series of protective walls and installing trap bags full of sand along some sections of Rockaway Beach. The trap bags will form the core of a new dune. Together the measures should reverse the damage done by Hurricane Sandy and also make the beach stronger and serve as protection for nearby communities.

The text of his weekly radio address can be seen [here](#).