



What Does the Energy Bill Mean for Builders?

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For the first time in almost a decade, the Senate voted Wednesday to approve major legislation to update the nation's energy policies. In short, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 is a wide-ranging bipartisan bill that has the potential to move the United States energy market in a cleaner direction by encouraging innovation and efficiency.

The Senate measure must still be reconciled with a House energy bill containing a number of provisions that the White House has threatened to veto. "After more than a year of effort, I'm extremely pleased to see it pass on a strong bipartisan basis". The broader energy bill was introduced by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). "The positive steps the bill would encourage are far outweighed by provisions that would delay movement to a clean energy economy and undermine action on climate change", said Marc Boom, associate director of Government Affairs at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Environmental policy analyst Peter Van Doren of the Cato Institute told The Christian Science Monitor by phone that the reason this bill had passed was less due to genuine goodwill than the success of each side's agenda.

The Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act was one of hundreds of amendments to a larger energy modernization bill, which sailed through the chamber 85-12 and was the first energy bill passed in more than eight years.

"With the passage of these amendments, a bill that was already very good from Alaska's perspective just became even better".

"By modernizing the energy grid, promoting the growth of innovative energy technologies, and supporting the use of renewable energy resources, this legislation will not only help create jobs, but it will also help contribute to more abundant, diverse, and affordable energy for Americans", Senator King said. It includes \$500 million for a 10-year research program to develop large-scale energy storage, a key for renewable energy such as wind and solar that fluctuates throughout the day.

Michigan's Democratic senators dropped the Flint provision last week after a months-long standoff with Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah. Stabenow and Peters said they would seek another way to get the Flint aid package through the Senate. An energy measure of this scope has not been passed since 2007, when Congress cut down on imported oil and ethanol in gasoline during George W. Bush's administration.

In addition to new funding, the bill would revamp USA law to speed approval for construction of energy infrastructure, upgrade parts of the electrical grid, and boost energy efficiency in buildings, among other things.

Heinrich's HUNT Act, which was included in the Senate bill Tuesday, would require public land agencies to identify high priority "landlocked" public lands now lacking legal public access.

The American Gas Association (AGA) on Wednesday praised the bill's passage, adding that it contained several provisions that would benefit the nation's natural gas customers.

Heinrich's amendment, co-sponsored by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and Rob Portman, R-Ohio, has passed the Senate before but has not been approved in the House.