



OVERNIGHT ENERGY: Energy on the Senate agenda, House Energy panel to unveil EPA bill in a month

By Andrew Restuccia and Ben Geman - 01/24/11 08:00 PM ET

Welcome back to OVERNIGHT ENERGY, E2's daily roundup of the energy news you need to know and a look ahead to tomorrow's action. Please send tips and comments to Ben Geman, ben.geman@thehill.com, and Andrew Restuccia, arestuccia@thehill.com.

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STATE OF PLAY: Reid to introduce placeholder energy bill

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) will introduce Tuesday a placeholder energy bill, the substance of which will be filled in later.

The bill will be one of 10 placeholder bills Reid will introduce Tuesday as he kicks off the legislative work of the 112th Congress. The energy bill will get the honor of being S.4, the fourth bill introduced in the new Congress. A Reid spokesman said the placeholders are "Senses of the Senate that highlight our priorities for the year."

The introduction of the placeholder bill indicates that energy will have a significant place in this year's policy debate in the chamber, despite last year's failed attempt to pass a climate bill in the Senate. All the major players from last year's climate talks – Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) – say they want to be involved in this year's energy debate.

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), whose committee has jurisdiction over the issue, will be a co-sponsor of the placeholder legislation. Bingaman's committee passed both a broad energy bill and an oil spill response bill in the last Congress, both with Republican support. It's unclear what provisions from those bills will make their way into energy legislation. But Bingaman spokesman Bill Wicker told The Hill that the senator has "a pair of other energy-themed bills that are almost ready for prime-time."

Tuesday is the first day in the new Congress that senators can introduce legislation. A number of senators have said they will introduce energy and oil spill legislation early in the year – Sen. Jay Rockefeller's (D-W.Va.) bill to delay Environmental Protection Agency climate rules by two years and Sen. Robert Menendez's (D-N.J.) bill to remove the oil spill liability cap are two examples. But it remains to be seen who, other than Reid, will introduce energy bills on Tuesday.

NEWS BITES:

House Energy and Commerce EPA bill to be unveiled in a month

Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee are working on a bill to limit EPA's climate authority. The bill, energy subcommittee Chairman Ed Whitfield (R-Ky.) said late Monday night, will be unveiled in the next four to six weeks.

Whitfield suggested the bill will be a broad indictment of the EPA's policies. It will touch on the EPA's air transport rules, its new source review requirements and its plans to impose new greenhouse gas standards large facilities.

The committee will have a series of hearings on the legislation, Whitfield said. "We're not going to just introduce a bill and take it to committee for a vote," he said.

More State of the Union predictions

Whitfield said Monday he hopes President Obama recognizes in his State of the Union address Tuesday that the United States must continue to rely on fossil fuels, even if it begins moving toward renewable energy.

"I would love to see him focus on energy and the importance of that for remaining competitive in the global marketplace," Whitfield said. "In order to do that, we're going to have to use some traditional energy sources as well as all of the others."

"His administration has been totally focused on green energy," he added. "All the stimulus funds, everything has been going for that. And I think we need a more balanced approach."

Whitfield also said he would be "surprised" if Obama said he will veto any legislation limiting EPA's authority.

"I would pretty surprised if he drew a line in the sand at EPA," he said.

Lugar loves his Prius

Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), who called on President Obama Monday to [commit to energy security goals](#) and said he would introduce energy legislation this year, also said he is a Prius-lover. He has owned a Prius since 2005 and said he has received his fair share of flack from auto-industry constituents in Indiana.

Lugar expressed frustration that more Americans don't drive electric or hybrid vehicles. "We do have alternatives presently, but they are not being taken by a very large prohibitive majority of the public," he said. But he rejected the idea of passing legislation that puts too many restrictions on gas-guzzling vehicles. The country shouldn't "rely on legislators to say by golly, you're all going to have to drive Prius's," he said.

Upton and Dingell to sit together at State of the Union address

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) will sit with Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), the former head of the panel, during Tuesday's State of the Union address.

Energy Department, NOAA talk about the weather -- formally

The Energy Department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are ramping up their collaboration on the nexus between renewable energy and weather forecasting. The two agencies have signed a formal [memorandum of understanding](#), which is aimed at better integrating renewable energy sources into the nation's power system.

Upton stresses commitment to ‘transparency’ after Waxman query

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) is emphasizing his commitment to accurate witness testimony following a top Democrat’s [request for a joint probe](#) of information a climate skeptic provided to the panel in 2009.

Ranking committee Democrat Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), as we reported earlier Monday, has asked Upton to review whether climatologist Patrick Michaels of the Cato Institute misled the panel about the extent of his energy industry funding. A GOP committee aide, in a statement Monday, didn’t address the inquiry about Michael’s specifically, but broadly emphasized Upton’s commitment to transparency.

“Republicans first put truth-in-testimony requirements in place in 1995 and strengthened those requirements earlier this month (over the objections, it could be noted, of House Democrats). Chairman Upton has been clear about his commitment to transparency in the legislative process, and under his leadership the committee will adhere to both the letter and the spirit of truth-in-testimony requirements and other committee rules and practices,” the aide said.

Upton hits EPA over looming boiler rules

Speaking of Upton, he’s mulling his options now that a federal court is forcing EPA to [complete long-overdue rules next month](#) that create new standards for toxic emissions from industrial boilers.

EPA had asked the court for a delay of more than a year to complete Maximum Achievable Control Technology standards for boilers, but was denied. Upton, however, linked the situation to EPA’s separate climate rules.

“The Boiler MACT rules are a perfect example of what happens when the EPA diverts its resources and attention away from its core responsibilities in order to pursue controversial regulatory schemes – such as its greenhouse gas regime – that lack support in Congress,” he said.

Electric vehicle advocates offer roadmap

The Electric Drive Transportation Association on Monday released a [list of recommendations](#) aimed at spurring faster deployment of electric cars, hybrids and fuel-cell vehicles.

ON TAP TUESDAY: Top White House green official speaks

It’s day two of the [Clean Economy Summit](#), a Washington, D.C. conference hosted by the Clean Economy Network, which is an advocacy group of entrepreneurs, investors and others involved with low-carbon technologies. Speakers Tuesday include Nancy Sutley, the head of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

ON TAP TUESDAY II: Oil industry group presses for deepwater permits

The American Petroleum Institute will keep the heat on the Interior Department to resume permitting for deepwater oil-and-gas projects in the Gulf of Mexico. The group will release a study by the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie that “examines the economic impact of continued delays for deepwater drilling permits.” The study presumably will conclude that the impact is not good.

ON TAP TUESDAY III: Going green, European-style

The Environmental and Energy Study Institute and several partners will host a Capitol Hill forum on “City-University Partnerships for Urban Sustainability: European Success Stories.”

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The cold weather didn't put energy news into a deep freeze Monday.

On E2, we reported that Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) accused the White House of a [botched sales pitch](#) on energy. Elsewhere, we reported that a member of the Senate's GOP leadership had [tough words](#) for the presidential oil spill commission; looked at [Rep. Henry Waxman's \(D-Calif.\) claim](#) that a prominent climate skeptic may have misled the Energy and Commerce Committee; reported on Capitol Hill efforts to [challenge EPA's approval](#) of higher ethanol blends; and noted that [Republicans are cutting](#) part of Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) "Green the Capitol" program.

From there, we blogged about: The completion of [subcommittee rosters](#) on the House Natural Resources Committee; Sen. John Kerry's (D-Mass.) belief that President Obama [will embrace](#) "major" energy initiatives in Tuesday's State of the Union speech; and the latest on federal efforts to [improve vehicle fuel economy](#) in coming years.

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