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Bam's climate Rx: All pain, no gain

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The cap-and-trade bill that the House passed last summer aims to force Americans to reduce those dreaded carbon emissions by 83 percent in less than four decades -- to the same per-capita level as 1867. Yet, even under the Al Gore-approved climate-science models, the bill would do nothing to stop global warming.

The bill is 1,000-plus pages of rules, regulations, handouts, subsidies and whatever else House leaders deemed necessary. Not one of the 435 members read the whole monstrosity -- because the leadership dropped 300 new pages on their desks the night before they voted.

Yet the central point is clear enough: The bill simply drives up the price of fossil-fuel based energy so high that the nation will have to somehow get along with only 17 percent of the gasoline and fossil-fuel-powered electricity that it uses today.

Don't ask how much it will cost. No one really knows, since you can't put a price on something that has yet to be defined.

Last Tuesday, President Obama cited the BP blowout as reason for the Senate to pass its version of the House bill. But senators know that expensive emission reductions are profoundly unpopular. Congress members found this out last summer when protests erupted nationwide within 24 hours of the bill's passage. Polls also suggest that a vote for the warming bill (especially on top of a vote for the health-care bill) is not a good way to keep a job in Congress this November.

And, again, the bills (neither the House-like Kerry-Lieberman tome, nor the climate-change *lite* by Indiana's Sen. Richard Lugar) would do nothing measurable about climate change.

The median guess from the United Nations is that, if we do nothing to change our ways, the average world surface temperature will rise about 5 degrees Fahrenheit this century. (In fact, the trends in recent decades strongly suggest that this is an overestimate -- but let's accept it for the sake of the argument.)

Now, if only the United States does change its ways, by adopting something like the House bill, we'd prevent about two-tenths of a degree of that warming, according to the UN's climate calculator. That is, the temperature in 2100 gets reduced to what it would otherwise be in 2096. All pain, no gain.

Even if every nation that has "obligations" under the UN's Kyoto Protocol on global warming also adopts and enforces it, it would cut warming a mere 7 percent below the "business as usual" level, an amount probably too small to measure with confidence.

Why would such drastic action on the part of America, Europe and Japan do so little to change the world? Because the older industrial nations are fast becoming bit players when it comes to global CO2 emissions. America's been pretty stagnant in the last decade -- while China's have been staggering.

In eight years, China's annual totals will be equal to what they emit now plus *everything* we emit. So if we stopped emitting completely, China completely counters our effort.

Add to that a simple fact which no cap-and-trade bill admits: That legislation would push even more of our industry into migrating to China, India and other nations that have no intention of reducing emissions by making energy more expensive.

Bottom line: This legislation won't lower global temperatures -- but merely make life more expensive. It'll force you to buy things you don't want, like much more expensive cars, and to use energy sources you'd normally bypass, like ethanol, solar and windmills. All have to be massively subsidized -- with your tax dollars -- to compete with today's mix of coal, gasoline and natural gas.

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