

Congress Should Not Mandate New Greenhouse Gas Reporting

Several bills have been introduced in the 108th Congress that would create a new mandatory greenhouse gas collection and reporting regulatory system to be administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (*See S. 17, Daschle-Jeffords; S. 139, Lieberman-McCain; H.R. 1245, Olver.*) These bills are complicated and lengthy proposals. Moreover, they have not undergone the scrutiny of Senate or House hearings to determine their need, the potential costs to the government and affected entities and persons, and the paperwork burdens on the U.S. economy.

Key Reasons Why Congress Should Oppose Efforts to Mandate New Greenhouse Gas Reporting:

- Under existing law, energy and related greenhouse gas data are already collected, aggregated, and annually made public on a national basis by the EPA and the Energy Information Administration (EIA). In addition, the EPA annually publishes a comprehensive “Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks” pursuant to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That inventory uses data from a myriad of public and private sources; allocates emissions among six U.S. economic sectors (residential, commercial, industry, transportation, electricity generation, and agriculture); and provides an analysis of that data.
- President Bush already has directed the Department of Energy to improve its guidelines for voluntary reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and emission reductions and avoidances under section 1605(b) of the Energy Policy Act (EPAct) of 1992. Furthermore, the President has ordered EIA to enhance the section 1605(b) database and registry under EPAct. These efforts and those of other agencies involved in the EPAct reporting process are well underway.
- Mandating new federal greenhouse gas data collection beyond existing programs could impose billions of dollars in new and unnecessary costs and paperwork burdens on businesses without demonstrable justification or benefit and without clear purpose.
- On the other hand, voluntary reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and emission reductions and avoidances is consistent with EPAct, the President’s climate policy, and the voluntary greenhouse gas reduction programs that business and industry launched in February 2003.