

Farm Futures

Farm Bureau, Representatives Express Concern about Current Climate Legislation May 19, 2009

The American Clean Energy and Security Act is drawing fire from several directions. In addition to receiving a letter expressing the concerns of the National Corn Growers Association on Monday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee also heard from the American Farm Bureau Federation. President Bob Stallman stated that the legislation ignores the complex needs of a very diverse U.S. agricultural industry, saying the bill fails to include key principles critical to U.S. agriculture including leaving ag out of the greenhouse gas cap provisions.

"The (bill) is laden with so many policy prescriptions that its impact on the U.S. is almost impossible to measure and evaluate," Stallman said. "We can be certain of some things, however—it will increase our operating costs and reduce our competitiveness abroad."

Several members of Congress have voice serious opposition to provisions of the bill, especially how it deals with biofuels. Last week House Ag Committee Chairman Collin Peterson, D-Minn., and Ranking Member Frank Lucas, R-Okla., along with a bipartisan group of 42 co-sponsors introduced the Renewable Fuels Standard Improvement Act to reverse unfair measures in the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed rule on greenhouse gas emissions. Peterson has said he refuses to support any climate change emission limits on biofuels production. According to AFBF energy specialist Anne Steckel those demands could be part of the deliberations this week.

"The legislation that Chairman Peterson introduced is a strong signal of support for the biofuels industry," Steckel said. "I think it will be taken seriously as we move into the climate change legislation."

Also moving against portions of the legislation is the Rural America Solutions Group, a group of Representatives of which Lucas is a co-chair. They point out that residents in rural areas must travel farther for routine errands; rural households spend 58% more on fuel than urban residents as a percentage of income; and industries that will be most negatively impacted by higher energy costs include: agriculture, manufacturing, construction, transportation, mining, and utilities.