

Oklahoma Farm Report

Democrats and Republicans Denounce Waxman-Markey Climate Change Bill in House Ag Committee Hearing June 12, 2009

Democrats and Republicans Denounce Waxman-Markey Climate Change Bill in House Ag Committee Hearing The House Agriculture Committee held a hearing Thursday on the much talked about Waxman-Markey climate change and energy legislation. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Committee Chairman Henry Waxman want to push the bill through rather quickly. But, Ranking Member, Frank Lucas, said – the most important thing we can do for our agriculture community is allow the legislative process to work, to take the time to understand the consequences of our actions.

Lucas said here we are today with our first public hearing to consider a bill that is written to last forever. This is a bill that is enormous in size and consequence that has the potential to permanently damage the standard of living for every man, woman, and child for decades to come.

Lucas pointed out that the cap-and-trade part of the bill - creates a national energy tax that will do more harm to production agriculture, American industry, and our standard of living than it will do any good for the environment. As for its affect on agriculture, Lucas said - I cannot support a bill that will damage an industry that consistently provides America and the world with an abundant and affordable food and fiber supply.

The lead witness in the hearing was Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, who was in front of the lawmakers for just over three hours. He not only was told that this bill was unacceptable by the Republicans, but House Democrats got their licks in as well. In fact, House Ag Democrats and Republicans told Secretary Vilsack there will be no climate change bill - or none agriculture can live with - unless the Administration forces changes in the pending measure approved by the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Democrat Leonard Boswell told fellow Iowan Vilsack he could not support his party's climate change bill as written - and probably none on the Ag Committee could either.

Later in the hearing, six farm leaders offered their perspective and several key points surfaced. One was the exclusion of agriculture from being listed in the bill as an industry that would participate in the offset program that would make up a key part of the bill. In addition, ag groups repeated over and over the need to have USDA oversee any offset program for agriculture, not the EPA.