

by Congressman Earl Blumenauer
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The House of Representatives is preparing to take one of its biggest environmental steps in 20 years as we move forward on legislation that will reduce global warming pollution and hold polluters accountable.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES) is coming to the House floor, and not a moment too soon. Although I constantly marvel at Congress's collective ability to dodge, weave, and stall, the discussion of how to save the planet is becoming increasingly difficult to kick down the road. We have clearly run out of time. We no longer have the luxury of avoiding the hard decisions.

For several years, I have been open to different approaches when it comes to reducing our nation's carbon emissions. I have cosponsored legislation that taxes carbon and legislation that institutes a carbon cap-and-trade system. I have talked repeatedly with supporters of all numerous approaches, trying to play a constructive role that advances the debate.

Now we need results, and I have concluded that putting a cap on carbon emissions and creating a market that will spur clean energy innovation is far superior to any other option. Most importantly, this is a bill we can actually pass now, which means taking immediate action to finally address global warming.

Chairman Waxman and Subcommittee Chairman Markey have worked tirelessly on climate legislation that will invest in clean, renewable energy, put a cap on dangerous carbon emissions, and create millions of new jobs. The negotiating process has required a lot of work and late nights, and it lays out how we as a country will tackle the major challenges of reducing our carbon output and fighting global warming. I have worked closely with them to advance this bill and strengthen it along the way.

I worked to get more funding in ACES for low-carbon transportation options. While there was not funding in the original bill, it became clear that to truly rein in global warming, we would need to consider how we get around on a day-to-day basis. This idea originated from a bill I introduced earlier this year called CLEAN-TEA (or the Clean Low-Emissions Affordable New Transportation Equity Act). While my bill would have allocated more money to transportation, ACES is a great start. As much as \$537 million in the first few years - and then later up to \$1 billion (as allowances become worth more) - will go toward projects that make it easier for people to walk, ride bicycles or take public transportation. Paying for these projects will also create jobs in local construction and transportation sectors.

The energy and climate bill is not only a victory for environmentalists; it is a victory for all who are concerned about our crumbling infrastructure system. Revenue from the cap and trade system will allow states to invest in more carbon-neutral transportation alternatives like high-speed rail, walking, and bicycling. The energy and climate bill takes off where the recovery package left off. In fact, in combination these two bills will create millions of jobs around the nation in the energy, new technology, electrical and construction sectors. They will help to bring down my state's unemployment rate, which is at an all-time high. The bottom line is that the energy and climate bill will help us grow our economy and finally address some of the major issues we face with our nation's transportation infrastructure.