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U.S. House Passes Climate Change Legislation

Bill establishes cap-and-trade program, renewable electricity standard, and energy efficiency standards

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 on Friday, June 26, by a vote of 219 to 212.

The bill would establish a cap-and-trade system in the United States that aims to reduce U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 83 percent below 2005 levels by mid-century. It also seeks to promote the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies and improvements in energy efficiency.

Looking ahead, the U.S. Senate is expected to hold hearings on its version of the climate bill in July. The Environment and Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over the climate bill in the Senate, may vote on the bill in September, and the committee, which is dominated

by liberal Democrats, is expected to pass it. But the bill's chances before the full Senate are much less clear. A minimum of 60 votes is needed to break a procedural block on the bill, and other priorities, such as health care, budget issues, and the economy, raise questions as to whether the bill would even be considered at all.

Additionally, the narrow margin of victory casts doubt as to whether the House version of the bill will attract support from senators representing states dominated by coal or heavy industry. The 219 to 212 outcome is not expected to generate substantial momentum for the bill in the Senate, creating significant uncertainty as to whether President Obama will be able to sign comprehensive climate legislation prior to the international climate treaty negotiations in Copenhagen in December.