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## Reid to Senate Dems: Climate change bill will wait until autumn

By Darren Goode - 07/22/10 02:32 PM ET

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) will bring a limited package of oil spill response and energy measures to the floor next week, delaying action until at least this fall on a broader proposal that would impose greenhouse gas limits on power plants, senior Senate Democratic aides said.

Aides insisted Reid's decision is a nod to the packed floor schedule the Senate faces before it leaves in two weeks for the August recess, and that he has not abandoned plans to try and bring up a broader climate and energy plan later in the year.

But other legislative priorities and election-year politics might scuttle the wider climate and energy plan altogether.

Reid discussed his plans with Senate Democrats at a Thursday meeting.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) described Reid as having delayed efforts to advance climate change legislation until after the August break.

"What he suggested is that we move forward on several bills to address energy and the oil spill and then continue to work on the climate piece when we get back," she said after the meeting in the Capitol.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) said the energy provisions slated to move before the break are aimed at boosting deployment of natural gas-powered vehicles and funding home energy efficiency retrofits.

"There is a lot to do but we have to take the first step," she said.

She noted that "we don't have any Republican support to overcome a filibuster" on climate legislation at the moment.

The limited package also will likely allow Democrats to push through a response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill — such as tougher rig-safety requirements.

The bill will not include a renewable electricity production mandate boosting power sources such as solar and geothermal that are key industries in Reid's home state of Nevada.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee gave bipartisan support to such a mandate last year. But it is also controversial because Republicans have sought to ensure it includes all nuclear energy production – both existing and future.

The mandate from the Senate panel just includes new nuclear production. Southeastern lawmakers from both parties have also argued that their region does not have the resources to meet a national mandate.

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass) — who has helped lead the effort to reach a deal on focusing a carbon-pricing plan on electric utilities — acknowledged Thursday that “the chances of this bill are very tough right now.” He cited “fear” from those who have not signed on to a carbon-pricing measure because of possible rebuke from voters.

“We need to take the fear out of this and empower our colleagues to go out and vote,” Kerry told a townhall event hosted by Clean Energy Works.

*—Ben Geman contributed to this report*

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