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May 7, 2010

Graham Calls for 'Pause' in Pursuing Energy Bill

By **JOHN M. BRODER**

WASHINGTON — Senator [Lindsey Graham](#), one of the chief sponsors of a nascent plan to address energy and [climate change](#) in the Senate, said Friday that the proposal had no chance of passage in the near term and called for a "pause" in consideration of the issue.

But his two co-sponsors, Senators [John Kerry](#), Democrat of Massachusetts, and [Joseph I. Lieberman](#), independent of Connecticut, vowed to press forward with a broad energy and global warming plan next week. They have been working with the White House and an array of business and environmental groups to fashion a package designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce dependence on foreign [oil](#) and create millions of clean-energy jobs.

But Mr. Graham, Republican of South Carolina, said that the current political climate had made it impossible to consider such a difficult subject. In a statement Friday, he said that the [oil spill](#) in the Gulf of Mexico had heightened concern about expanded [offshore drilling](#), which he considers a central component of any energy legislation. Mr. Graham also said that Democratic insistence on taking up [immigration](#) policy before energy had chilled his enthusiasm for any global warming measure.

Without the support of Mr. Graham and at least a handful of Republicans, the measure may well be dead for the year. Mr. Graham praised Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lieberman for their efforts, but said he would not join them.

"As I have previously indicated, a serious debate on energy legislation is significantly compromised with the cynical politics of comprehensive immigration reform hanging over the Senate," Mr. Graham said in a statement. "In addition to immigration, we now have to deal with a catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which creates new policy and political challenges not envisioned in our original discussions. In light of this, I believe it would be wise to pause the process and reassess where we stand."

The Obama administration is also reconsidering its support for expanded offshore drilling, saying it would await the results of several investigations into the cause of the Deepwater Horizon blowout last month before moving ahead with plans for new offshore exploration.

Mr. Graham, seen as the essential bridge to Senate Republicans on climate change policy, also said that many Democrats were now uneasy about the nation's energy policy and few if any Republicans would support a broad measure.

"When it comes to our nation's policy on energy independence and pollution control, I don't believe any American finds the status quo acceptable," Mr. Graham said. "Many senators from both parties have stated that Congress should set energy and carbon pollution policy, not the E.P.A. I could not agree more.

"Therefore, we should move forward in a reasoned, thoughtful manner and in a political climate which gives us the best chance at success. Regrettably, in my view, this has become impossible in the current environment."

He concluded, "I believe there could be more than 60 votes for this bipartisan concept in the future. But there are not nearly 60 votes today, and I do not see them materializing until we deal with the uncertainty of the immigration debate and the consequences of the oil spill."

Mr. Graham has been working for months with Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lieberman to fashion a complex measure to address the nation's greenhouse gas emissions and try to wean the nation off fossil fuels. The three were set to unveil their proposal two weeks ago, but Mr. Graham backed out at the last minute in a protest over Democrats' apparent intention to take up immigration first.

Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lieberman have continued to refine the measure and talk with industry and interest groups.

In a statement, Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lieberman said they remained confident that the climate measure they are preparing can pass.

They said the oil spill and last month's deadly mining accident in West Virginia had served to dramatize the nation's need for a new, broad-based energy policy that moves away from reliance on coal and oil.

"We are more encouraged today that we can secure the necessary votes to pass this legislation this year in part because the last weeks have given everyone with a stake in this issue a heightened understanding that as a nation, we can no longer wait to solve this problem which threatens our economy, our security and our environment," the two senators said.

They said they would present their proposal on Wednesday with representatives from industry, labor, environmental and faith-based organizations.