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States Fight For Their Rights On Climate Regs

Ashlie Rodriguez
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With the release of a Senate energy and climate bill just days away, states want to make sure they still have a place in environmental regulation.

In a media teleconference today, state officials and others hoped the forthcoming Senate bill would not summarily override the states on emissions standards or wipe out programs that work on a local level but might not succeed for the nation as a whole.

"Industry and their allies in Congress are pushing to block states' ability to lead the way in tackling global warming," said **Rob Sargent**, energy program director of the advocacy group Environment America. "In light of the vital role that states have played in moving our nation forward, blocking states' ability to innovate on these issues would be like killing the goose that laid the golden egg."

The group advocates a federal-state component to the legislation in recognition of states' leadership on climate issues and their ability to respond more quickly to new scientific and technological developments.

"When it comes to energy policy and the environment, one size -- truly -- does not fit all," said **Mary Nichols**, chair of the California Air Resources Board.

Nichols highlighted the Clean Air Act as an example of federal legislation built on a model that doesn't just involve the federal government "centralizing the authority and then doling it out to the states," but offers "a true partnership effort."

Vicki Arroyo, executive director of the Georgetown Climate Center, says Sens. **John Kerry**, D-Mass., **Lindsey Graham**, R-S.C., and **Joe Lieberman**, I/D-Conn., claim their bill will provide "regulatory certainty" that would be hard to maintain across 50 states.

At the same time, **Doug Scott**, director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, said all the various policy areas where states have an impact -- land use, smart grids and smart growth, building codes and appliance standards, consumer aid, job training and workforce development -- call for "coordination and collaboration between the different levels of government."

The role of state regulatory authority also comes into play when addressing the effect of pollution in air and water systems, and in energy efficiency.

States have been "powerful drivers" of climate change reduction, said Arroyo, initiating projects such as California's greenhouse gas emission standards (which were adopted by the federal government); auctions for carbon emission allowances; and regional cap-and-trade systems.

Allowing states to continue with these policies "creates a stable investment climate," said Arroyo. The benefits' ripple effect would stimulate innovation, save ratepayers money, reduce emissions and make the economy and businesses more competitive, said **David Littell**, commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

"The reality is that the states are going to have to be necessary partners to this," Scott said. "They need to be able to continue on with the types of programs that they've been able to carry out over the last several years. Without that, you really don't have the robust federal program that's going to be necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

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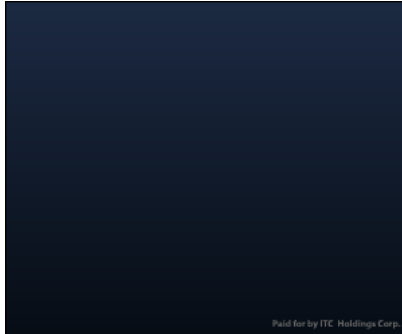
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