

# E.P.A. Plans to Phase in Regulation of Emissions

By JOHN M. BRODER  
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WASHINGTON — Facing wide criticism over their recent finding that greenhouse gases endanger the public welfare, top Environmental Protection Agency officials said Monday that any regulation of such gases would be phased in gradually and would not impose expensive new rules on most American businesses.

E.P.A.'s administrator, Lisa P. Jackson, wrote in a letter to eight coal-state Democrats who have sought a moratorium on regulation that only the biggest sources of greenhouse gases would be subjected to limits before 2013. Smaller ones would not be regulated before 2016, she said.

"I share your goals of ensuring economic recovery at this critical time and of addressing greenhouse gas emissions in sensible ways that are consistent with the call for comprehensive energy and climate legislation," Ms. Jackson wrote.

The eight Democratic senators, led by John D. Rockefeller IV of West Virginia, said hugely significant decisions about energy, the economy and the environment should be made by elected representatives, not by federal bureaucrats.

The senators, who earlier questioned broad cap-and-trade legislation pushed by the Obama administration, join a number of Republican lawmakers, industry groups and officials from Texas, Alabama and Virginia in challenging the proposed E.P.A. regulations of industrial sources. Senate Republicans are going a step further, seeking to prevent the agency from taking any action to limit greenhouse gases, which are tied to global warming.

Ms. Jackson warned that if the Republicans thwarted the agency's efforts to address climate change, it would kill the deal negotiated last year to limit carbon pollution from cars and light trucks and would have a chilling effect on the government's scientific studies of global warming.

"It also would be viewed by many as a vote to move the United States to a position behind that of China on the issue of climate change, and more in line with the position of Saudi Arabia," Ms. Jackson wrote.

The group led by Mr. Rockefeller asked Ms. Jackson to suspend any E.P.A. regulations of stationary sources — including coal-burning power plants and large industrial facilities — while Congress considers comprehensive energy and climate change legislation. The House passed a major climate and energy bill last summer that would have overridden some of the agency's regulatory authority. The Senate, however, has not acted on the issue and there is considerable doubt that it will do so this year.

"E.P.A. actions in this area would have enormous implications, and these issues need to be handled carefully and appropriately dealt with by the Congress, not in isolation by a federal environmental agency," Mr. Rockefeller said.

The Democrats who joined Mr. Rockefeller are Senators Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Mark Begich of Alaska, Carl Levin of Michigan, Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia and Max Baucus of Montana.

Manufacturers, oil companies and business coalitions also filed petitions objecting to the proposed rules.

Environmental advocates said the E.P.A. was justified in declaring carbon dioxide and gases that contribute to global warming to be dangerous pollutants under the Clean Air Act and was moving cautiously to regulate them.

"These answers from Lisa Jackson hopefully will reassure the authors of the letter that the E.P.A. is proceeding in a very measured way and doing what is achievable and affordable to curb global warming pollution and focusing as they should on the biggest sources like power plants and not small businesses," said David Doniger, climate policy director of the Natural Resources Defense Council.