

Barrasso, others may boycott proceedings

## **GOP senators balk on climate change vote**

By H. JOSEF HEBERT - Associated Press writer | Posted: Tuesday, November 3, 2009 12:00 am |



Barrasso

WASHINGTON -- Republican senators on Monday demanded additional studies on the cost and job impact of a climate bill before it is voted on by a key committee, exposing the sharp partisan divide in Congress over legislation aimed at addressing global warming.

Ranking GOP members of six Senate committees that are playing a part in crafting an overall bill to cut greenhouse gases said that an Environmental Protection Agency analysis was unsatisfactory, although supporters of the bill called it an exhaustive examination.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., co-sponsor of the climate bill, which is before her Environment and Public Works Committee, said she planned to press ahead with consideration of the measure today, even as GOP panel members threatened to boycott the proceedings. Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., is a member of the committee.

In a letter to Boxer, the Republicans warned that failure to accommodate GOP senators seeking further studies "would severely damage rather than help" the chances of getting the bipartisan support needed to get a bill through the Senate.

The Democratic bill calls for imposing mandatory caps on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and industrial facilities and cutting emissions by 20 percent by 2020. Polluters would be given emission allowances that they could trade among themselves to ease the economic effect of the transition from fossil fuels.

But Barrasso and other Republicans have argued the bill -- patterned after legislation passed by the House earlier this year -- amounts to a huge energy tax because energy, including electricity, from fossil fuels will become more expensive. Boxer argues such costs can be contained and cites the EPA study that says the cost to households would on average be \$80 to \$111 a year.

Boxer said she wants to try to accommodate the Republicans, but insisted she will push ahead with plans to begin voting on amendments to the bill. But when those votes will start was unclear. Boxer said she will make available officials from the EPA today so Republicans can quiz them about their cost study.

"We think this is going the extra mile for our friends on the other side," Boxer told reporters Monday. "We want to move the process forward."

But Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the environment committee's ranking Republican, said he expects GOP senators to stay away, except possibly for one Republican to make the case for the boycott. "There has to be some sort of leverage" to get a more detailed study, said Inhofe, a sharp critic of not only the Democratic bill, but of the science of climate change.

While Boxer said she hoped the Republicans would "change their minds" and participate, Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., another committee member, wasn't as kind at a news conference.

"It's almost like school children over there," said Lautenberg. He called on the Republicans "to step up to the plate."