

Republican amendment seeks to block Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation of greenhouse gases

While the U.S. Senate remains in recess until Tuesday January 19, new details are emerging about the development of a Republican amendment, spearheaded by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The amendment, whose introduction may come as early as January 20, directly attacks the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act.

Murkowski's amendment places a one-year suspension on EPA's ability to regulate stationary sources of greenhouse gases, such as power plants, through the Clean Air Act. The amendment is expected to be part of a larger Senate budgetary resolution aimed at increasing the US federal debt ceiling. The Alaskan Senator also has the option to postpone a vote now and wait until next month to vote on a "resolution of disapproval" that would retroactively veto EPA's Endangerment Finding released in December.

Without Congressional action, the EPA is set to regulate vehicle emissions and factory pollutants by spring of 2010. While Murkowski may have the Republican majority behind her in support for this amendment, significant obstacles block the path to halting EPA regulation of carbon emissions entirely. Not only do the Democrats still hold the majority on Capitol Hill, but President Obama's approval and signature are required for the amendment to pass.

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