

ECA Update April 20, 2016

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Energy Reform Bill Passes Senate

ECA Staff

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The Hill

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Earlier today, a major bipartisan energy bill passed on the Senate floor 85-12. This is the first major piece of energy legislation to pass since the George W. Bush administration in 2007.

A section of the bill requires the Department of Energy to conduct a study and report to Congress on identifying opportunities for increased access to high-performance computing services and facilities at National Labs. Increased access to these services would be given to small and medium manufactures to enhance manufacturing and economic development. Read the full section [here](#).

Read the full bill summary [here](#).

Senate passes energy reform bill

Upcoming Events

April 2016

20

“The Challenge of Excess Facilities on DOE Sites”
House Nuclear Cleanup Caucus
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm
Capitol Hill

April 2016

21

HASC Subcommittee for Strategic Forces NDAA Markup.
[Watch live here.](#)

April 2016

20-21

EMSSAB Chairs Meeting
Oak Ridge, TN

May 2016

The Hill

April 20, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Senate on Tuesday passed a wide-ranging bill to modernize energy policy, the culmination of nearly a year and a half of bipartisan work by top energy senators.

The legislation, which its sponsors hope to become the first broad energy law in nearly a decade, is a collection of policy changes aimed at tasks like electric grid modernization and natural gas exports, although it avoids the most controversial proposals on either side.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and lead author of the bill, hailed it Tuesday as a “broad, bipartisan and, some would suggest, long-stalled energy bill.”

“We have had important compromises on clean energy technology, energy efficiency, infrastructure and truly bipartisan support,” Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), the committee’s ranking member, added.

“So we need to pass this bill. That's why we've been so persistent. It's been since 2007 that we passed an energy bill.”

The bill passed 85-12. All of the senators voting against it were Republicans: Sens. John Boozman (Ark.), Tom Cotton (Ark.), Jim Lankford (Okla.), Mike Lee (Utah), Rand Paul (Ky.), David Perdue (Ga.), Marco Rubio (Fla.), Ben Sasse (Neb.), Tim Scott (S.C.), Jeff Sessions (Ala.), Richard Shelby (Ala.) and Pat Toomey (Pa.).

Boozman, Lee, Paul, Scott, Shelby and Toomey are running for reelection this year.

Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), both running for president, were not present to vote.

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EMAB Meeting
Aiken County, SC

May 2016

12-13

ECA Peer Exchange: Environmental
Management Issues
Washington, D.C.

For information contact:
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August 2016

9-10

Third Annual
Intermountain
Energy Summit
Idaho Falls, ID
[Visit website.](#)

September 2016

14-15

2016 National Cleanup
Workshop
Hilton Alexandria Mark
Center
Alexandria, VA

The bill includes numerous priorities from Republicans and Democrats around the theme of modernization. It pushes to improve the nation's electric grid, streamline the process for exporting liquefied natural gas, indefinitely renew the country's main conservation fund, clean up outdated regulations and spur more energy efficiency in buildings and elsewhere, among other provisions.

The Obama administration supports much of the bill, although it has stopped short of completely endorsing it.

Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said last week that he was very encouraged by the legislation.

"The energy bill, as it seems to be moving, will have many many positive elements," he told NPR. "It will really reinforce our commitment to energy technology innovation. It will recognize our reorganization in terms of better integration of energy and science programs. It will recognize our increasing responsibilities in emergency response for energy infrastructure disruptions."

Murkowski and Cantwell met as early as 2014 to discuss the prospects of passing an energy bill through the Senate this session. The final package was crafted after a bevy of hearings and is made up of bills from a host of senators, many of whom supported it when it cleared the Energy and Natural Resources Committee last fall.

But final passage comes after months of extra negotiations — behind the scenes, but also often in public view — over the future of the energy bill.

Leadership brought the bill to the floor in January and had hoped to secure an easy, bipartisan vote on the bill with only a few days of debate and amendment voting.

But Michigan's two Democratic senators — Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters — insisted on attaching to the bill an aid package for Flint, Mich., which is suffering through a water-contamination crisis. Democrats soon rallied around the cause and blocked further debate on an energy bill that didn't include Flint aid.



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Members spent months trying to hatch a deal on Flint. They were close to attaching a \$250 million package to the bill but couldn't overcome an objection from Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), who was concerned about the way the program was funded and put a hold on the bill.

Democrats last week said they were dropping their insistence that Flint be part of an energy bill, clearing the way for its return Tuesday to the floor.

Stabenow told reporters last week that Republicans had promised her "another path forward" for her Flint aid bill, but she declined to say what that path is.

"We have another opportunity," she said. "Obviously, people in Flint still can't drink the water and still can't function as a community. So we're not stopping. We're just choosing to take another path."

The energy package was the subject of intense lobbying from industry groups, environmentalists and free-market groups.

In January, a group of electricity and business organizations wrote a letter to Senate leaders endorsing the bill, praising its energy efficiency measures and saying it "includes pragmatic, reasonable energy policies."

But conservative groups, led by Heritage Action, have lambasted the bill for expanding government energy programs and increasing subsidies for certain types of energy.

"While some of the bill's provisions appear small in nature, taken together they would be a significant expansion of the federal government," the group said, urging a no vote from members. "When combined with the lack of significant conservative victories, the so-called Energy Policy Modernization Act is an 'all pain, no gain' proposition."

Climate group 350.org targeted the bill's liquified natural gas exports provisions on Tuesday, saying it is "a measure that would encourage more fracking for natural gas."

Environmental groups, though, focused most of their complaints on the House bill, legislation that included several red-meat conservative proposals designed to attract Republicans votes in the chamber.

The House cleared that bill in December, on a much more divided vote. Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), the chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, has said he hopes to craft a compromise bill with Senate negotiators that can pass both the House and Senate and secure a signature from President Obama.

