

EPA Labels Six Gases as Dangerous to Environment, Health

In an anticipated announcement, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has branded six gases, including methane and carbon dioxide, as being dangerous to the environment and health of Americans, *The Washington Post* reports. The agency will now start writing rules to lower those emissions, even if Congress does not approve climate change measures.

“These are reasonable, common-sense steps,” said EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson. They will guard the environment “without placing an undue burden on the businesses that make up the better part of our economy,” she said. Jackson also said that the EPA still would like Congress to pass climate legislation.

However, Republican leaders and U.S. business groups reacted by condemning the EPA action and saying any rules would be promptly tied up in litigation. “The stick approach isn’t going to work. In fact, Congress may retaliate,” said Mark Helmke, a senior adviser to Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN). “They could stop the funding, and they could change the law.”

The agency’s “endangerment finding” also belatedly addresses a U.S. Supreme Court order from April 2007 that decided the EPA had the power and obligation to control carbon dioxide gas as a pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

What is not clear is if the EPA’s findings will jumpstart Congress to decide on climate change legislation, which is now bogged down in the Senate. Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), who supports the Senate climate measure, said that “the message to Congress is crystal clear: Get moving.”

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