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## Climate change bills hit Senate committee

### Environmentalists, industry haggle over climate change studies.

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By Asher Price  
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF  
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Environmentalists, academics and industry representatives tangled Tuesday over whether the Legislature should study global warming and its impact on Texas.

Much more appeared to be at stake at the hearing of the Senate Natural Resources Committee than the studies Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, and Kirk Watson, D-Austin, had proposed.

Business interests said that the studies amounted to a pathway to pricey regulation and that the state should wait for the federal government to set rules on the issue.

Environmentalists said Texas, the nation's No. 1 emitter of carbon dioxide, which contributes to climate change, had a responsibility to address the problem, and said the federal government is dragging its heels.

The Ellis proposal calls for a global warming task force to "look at pollution problems and figure out what the answers are."

The bill has already been watered down: Specific targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions have been stripped out "in the interests of moving forward; that's a euphemism for not having enough votes," Ellis said.

The Watson bill would require the state environmental commission to figure out ways businesses can reduce greenhouse gases that won't cost them money.

As an example, he says, the state could tell businesses to replace their standard light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs, which use less energy and cost less to operate over the long run.

"No matter who's right in the so-called global warming debate, at the worst, we save money," Watson said.

But opponents of the bills said studies would open the way to costly restrictions for business.

"Global warming is not specific to Texas, and our strategies should be considered at the national level," said Debbie Hastings, vice president for environmental affairs at the Texas Oil and Gas Association. "A patchwork approach creates burdensome and ineffective regulations."


Bill Peacock, an analyst at the libertarian Texas Public Policy Foundation think tank, said government studies are likely to overestimate the capital costs of capping emissions and underestimate the benefits of global warming.

"Both bills are paths towards regulation," he said.

The Watson bill was voted out of committee Tuesday night.

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