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# Foundation aims to rally opposition to climate change legislation

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Last summer, the House of Representatives passed a massive 1,500-page climate change bill calling for establishment of a cap-and-trade bill. Before the Senate could pass similar legislation "the debate over health care absorbed all the oxygen in the room," said Kathleen Hartnett White, the Texas Public Policy Foundation's distinguished senior fellow and director of the Armstrong Center for Energy and the Environment.

White, in Midland this last week to talk with Midlanders Tim Dunn and Ernest Angelo, who serve on the foundation's board, and their special guests, observed that "the politics of passing health care reform has emboldened (representatives) so we have to be concerned."

While senators were more concerned about jobs than passing climate change legislation last fall, she said, "there is and has been in the last month or so greater interest in the Senate to pass a bill."

Should the Waxman-Markey bill pass, she continued, "the broad prediction has been that it would affect Texas more than any other state because energy is so much a part of the state's economy."

Indeed, the industry employed directly or indirectly almost 2 million Texans in 2007 and in 2008 sent \$9.9 billion in taxes to state, county, municipal and school treasuries throughout the state, according to a study by the American Council for Capital Formation for the foundation. If climate change legislation were to be enacted, the study estimated Texas would lose between 144,600 and 196,900 jobs by 2030 and gross state product would fall between \$29.9 billion and \$40.8 billion by 2030.

In the last 10 years, White said, the oil and gas industry has increased employment 52 percent and she noted that North Dakota saw oil and gas employment increase 100 percent in one year alone thanks to jobs related to drilling activity in the Bakken Oil Shale there.

The foundation, which has as its core principles limited government, free markets, private property rights, individual liberty and personal responsibility, calls itself "a do tank rather than a think tank," she quipped. Officials decided that opposition to the Waxman-Markey bill could be more effective if Texas teamed up with other states. So similar foundations in Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota and Michigan also conducted studies on the impact of the legislation on their individual economies.

"We think it would be more meaningful to analyze a 1,500-page bill on how it would impact a state and its specific industrial sectors," White explained.

Just as health care reform had been considered a dead effort before being passed this last week, White said there is a chance the Waxman-Markey bill also could be revived.

"There is opportunity," she said. "The eyes and ears of a sleeping giant have been opened. I really hope that a lot of the public outcry about the expansion of government and the take over of health care grabs onto this. The Waxman-Markey bill has over 1,000 new federal mandates to be implemented by 21 federal agencies. I think the public needs a constant feeding of basic information about the energy industry."

In her lifetime, said White, who has ranching operations in Jeff Davis and Presidio counties with her husband, "there has been such a growth in energy and such misunderstanding of what fossil fuels mean."

"The purpose of the bill is to supplant fossil fuels with alternative energy by making fossil fuel so expensive," she stated. With increasing demand for energy around the globe, she said, "it's all of the above. Fossil fuels can be used now with minimal adverse impact on the environment."

Fossil fuels, said the former chairman and commissioner on the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality, are 85 percent of the nation's energy source. "There is nothing else. Renewables don't have the capacity and they're so expensive."

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