

U.S. Chamber On Capitol Hill

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As the most representative business association in the United States, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has long reflected its members' commitment to international engagement and cooperation. Given the scale and dynamism of European investment in the United States and American investment in Europe, it is only logical that we consistently and very publicly advocate for closer collaboration between transatlantic stakeholders on all key issues from financial regulations to trade to investment to climate change.

As the U.S. Senate now considers climate change legislation, the priority for President Obama and Congress should be to enact policies that work for both the environment and the economy. The debate on Capitol Hill is expected to continue to be a long and contentious one, and it will continue well after the summit in Copenhagen has ended.

Unfortunately, some partisans have tried to distort the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's position on climate change legislation. To set the record straight, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has long supported strong action on climate change and a comprehensive international agreement to address this global challenge.

These are not new positions. They have been presented and discussed in correspondence, press statements, speeches, and Congressional testimony over a number of years.

In fact, the Chamber has advocated for federal legislation to control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We favor major programs to promote the development and deployment of alternative energy technologies and supplies — including nuclear energy. We are for significant initiatives by government and the private sector to further improve efficiency, which is the cheapest and most immediately accessible alternative energy. And, we are for a rational energy policy that ensures that we have enough affordable fuel and power to run our economy and protect our national security, while we work to transition to a more diverse energy mix in the future.

Controlling and reducing greenhouse gases across our entire society is a huge and complex undertaking. There will be deep and long-lasting impacts on our economy and on our daily lives. So it is very important that we get this right.

When the U.S. House of Representative took up its version of climate change legislation, the Waxman-Markey bill, the Chamber opposed this legislation. We cited overwhelming evidence that it would throw more Americans out of work, significantly raise energy prices, expand lawsuits, fail to establish regulatory certainty, and either put U.S. companies at a disadvantage globally or risk a trade war which could cost us overseas markets.

The Chamber was not alone in this position. After the House vote, President Obama himself “spoke out against a provision that would impose trade penalties on countries that

do not accept limits on global warming pollution,” according to the *New York Times*. “At a time when the worldwide economy is still deep in recession and we’ve seen a significant drop in global trade,” President Obama said, “I think we have to be very careful about sending any protectionist signals out there.” We certainly agree.

Together with our European partners, the U.S. Chamber remains a strong defender of the global rules-based trading system. We believe that national and international efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions must respect — not undermine — the work of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Failure to do so would impede economic recovery and ultimately the success of international solutions to environmental problems. Fortunately, that was also the consensus of the April 2009 G8 Business Summit in Italy. Moreover, in September the Chamber hosted 13 business groups from six continents to discuss the climate change and over two days held discussions on energy security, economic development and competitiveness, technology, finance, and a greater voice for the business community in the international negotiations.ⁱ

The fact that we opposed the Waxman-Markey bill does not mean we think the earth is flat. Rather, it means we oppose legislation that may harm our economy without producing environmental benefits, and we are trying to improve a bill that is still far from the end of the legislative process. In the same way, we will speak out when we believe Congress—or the Environmental Protection Agency—is headed in the wrong direction.

Our greatest challenge today is reviving the economy and creating the 20 million jobs we must have over the next 10 years just to re-provide jobs for the unemployed and keep pace with a growing population. Addressing climate change in a way that keeps people working and provides affordable and reliable energy is a goal shared by the great majority of the American people and the business community. The U.S. Chamber will continue to be a constructive partner in this debate and others that impact the business community.

ⁱ The groups’ declaration is available at the Chamber website:
<http://www.energyxxi.org/images/Uploaded/BizMEFStatementFINALv3.pdf>