**The Rise and Fall of Congressional US Climate Coalitions**

Matto Mildenberger
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The United States spent most of the 1990s and 2000s cast as the planet's climate villain. It was the United States that refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. It was the United States that, until being overtaken by China in 2007, was the largest global source of carbon pollution. And it was in the United States where climate denialism first took root in a network of fossil-fuel affiliated lobby groups and conservative think tanks.

Yet, US climate policy inaction obscured repeated efforts by powerful US actors to push climate reforms. Why did these efforts fail? And what can the dynamics of US climate policymaking tell us about future efforts to enact congressional climate reforms? In this project, I trace the legislative history of the two highest-profile congressional attempts to increase the cost of releasing US carbon pollution into the global atmosphere. First, I examine the Clinton Administration's proposal to implement a BTU energy tax proposal during the 103th Congress. The Clinton administration proposed this reform as part of its 1993 deficit reduction package, and explicitly framed the effort as a way to increase the cost of carbon pollution. The BTU tax eventually passed the House but was stripped from the overall deficit package by the Senate in mid-1993. Second, I examine efforts to enact a federal emissions trading scheme during the 111th Congress. In early 2009, House and Senate legislators began serious efforts to pass comprehensive climate reforms. These efforts culminated in the House passage of the American Clean Energy Security Act in June 2009. However, parallel efforts to pass climate reforms subsequently stalled in the Senate.

I argue that distributive conflict over climate policy reforms in both episodes shared a number of common features. In both cases, the failure of climate reform attempts resulted from an interaction between the political-opportunity structures facing politicians and the behavioral incentives faced by carbon-intensive economic interest groups. Most generally, climate policy preferences cross-cut existing political and economic coalitions, dispersing policy opponents throughout the political system. In moments when pro-climate forces seized control of the congressional policymaking agenda, policy proponents had to bargain with co-partisans representing carbon-intensive economic regions and sectors. While delicate distributive bargains were developed in the House that assembled a narrow coalition of support for climate reforms that accommodated, carbon-dependent Senate actors were able to stall policy action altogether. The influence of these climate policy opponents within Congress was systematically reinforced by carbon-dependent economic interest groups. Periodically shut out of climate policy design, these interest groups mobilized conflict over climate policy into the public domain in an effort to undermine legislative or electoral incentives associated with policy enactment.

To break the congressional climate policy logjam, I argue that policy proponents will need to design policies and advocacy strategies that directly confront the dynamics of US climate policy conflict. In particular, I emphasize the need to think about climate policymaking as a long-term distributive struggle in which short-term coalition-building strategies should not focus narrowly on climate or economic outcomes; instead, advocates need to also push policies and strategies that can help restructure the balance of policymaking influence during future episodes of climate policy conflict.