Cap-and-Trade idea needs full debate

by The Detroit News

Enacting a carbon cap-and-trade system is too transformational to allow it to be jammed through Congress without the full give-and-take of the legislative process and with the votes of just one party counting.

Credit Michigan Sen. Carl Levin for stepping in front of his own party's bulldozer to shout, "Slow down!"

Senate Democratic leaders know that cap-and-trade is an extremely divisive issue, pitting manufacturing states like Michigan against coastal states that have lost their minds to the global warming hysteria.

Levin correctly notes that a system of auctioning off carbon credits could drive up the cost of energy, meaning higher prices for nearly all goods, and put manufacturing industries at risk. He has joined seven of his Democratic colleagues in protesting the attempt to circumvent the normal legislative rules to get the bill passed without a full airing.

The cap-and-trade plan is well short of the 60 votes it needs to withstand a Senate filibuster. So Democrats are attempting to tuck the legislation into the budget bill, where it would need a simple majority of 51 votes.

Doing so would severely limit debate on a bill that would have a major impact on the national economy and the household budgets of every American. The pros and cons of the bill should be thoroughly argued, and the final version â€” if there is one â€” should be crafted in the philosophical middle.

But the tactic the Democrats want to employ would shut Republicans out of the discussion, as well as Democrats like Levin who are worried about how the bill will affect their states' key industries.

This is not the bipartisan approach to governing the Obama administration promised. It's one-party rule at its worst, and gives the radicals a much stronger voice than merited by their public support.

Legislation as controversial as cap-and-trade should receive a lengthy public airing and not be slipped inside a larger bill and rushed through as if it were just another piece of congressional pork.

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