

U.S. electric utilities increase lobbying

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The climate-change debate in Congress has resulted in juiced-up spending on lobbyists by U.S. electric utilities, a review of documents reveals.

The utilities, from Duke Energy to American Electric Power, together spent a total of \$51 million on lobbying lawmakers during the last six months of 2008, which was 30 percent, or \$12 million, higher than the same period of 2007, USA Today reported Monday.

The amped-up spending came as then-U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama and Democratic allies in the U.S. House of Representatives pushed for a "cap-and-trade" system that would require utilities to either cut carbon emissions by 20 percent by 2020 or buy credits to offset any emissions above the limit, the newspaper said.

Republican critics of the proposal, led by House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio, contend consumers will have to pick up the costs.

"(Lobbying is) what industry does with legislation," John Coequyt of the Sierra Club told USA Today. "They make it better for their bottom line."

Industry players reportedly support the cap-and-trade idea, but say they have hired lobbyists to shape how it will work.

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