



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on November 25, 2009

Obama Pledges Allegiance to Climate Change

President Obama is planning to promise a significant reduction in United States greenhouse gas emissions at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, despite lack of consensus over cap-and-trade legislation in Congress.



The president has yet to decide whether he will attend the conference, which runs from December 7 through 18, but according to [The New York Times](#), an unidentified White House official confirmed that the United States will deliver an emissions reduction goal in line with legislation currently before Congress. Though the [House agreed](#) in June to a 17 percent reduction in emissions from 2005 levels by 2020, the [Senate has yet to vote](#) on its version of the legislation.

The *Times* reports U.S. Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.), sponsor of the current Senate bill, S. 1733, said Obama would be safe in agreeing to reductions of 17 to 20 percent based on current Senate committee negotiations. Kerry's comments contradict another *Times* [article](#) published in October reporting a growing number of senators "unwilling to commit to voting for" cap-and-trade legislation.

The upcoming UN conference is important to environmentalists because deals struck in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol expire in 2012. International pressure is now on both China and the United States, which lead the world in greenhouse gas emissions. The *Times* article pointed out China is promising to reduce emissions by a "notable margin." Now the world is waiting to hear a similar pledge from Obama. Though cap-and-trade proponents hope Copenhagen yields a legally binding treaty, the Senate would have to ratify any promises Obama makes before the agreement could be enforced. The president is stuck between guaranteeing more than the Senate will deliver (such was the fate of Kyoto) and estimating an embarrassingly small margin.

So the international heat is on. The BBC is scheduled to air a documentary Wednesday called "[Can Obama Save the Planet?](#)", which promises to give Brits an inside look at what is keeping our president from leading the charge against global warming. The finger of blame, it seems, is directed at American citizens who "see Obama's plans as an attack on their liberties." According to the show teaser, "It's not surprising that, in this divided America, the president's push to limit greenhouse gas emission has become stuck in the mud of Washington politics."

The [BBC](#) also reports England's Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband, is urging President Obama to attend the meeting. "We want to get as far as we can at Copenhagen. The substantive commitments that leaders make are what matters. If we have to lock the lawyers in a room for a few months afterwards to turn that into a legal agreement, that's OK."



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