



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on June 13, 2023

GOP Senators Cosponsor Bill That Will Lead to Carbon Tariffs — and Maybe a Domestic Carbon Tax

Four Republican senators are cosponsoring a bill that the [Washington Post](#) says “would lay the groundwork for America’s first carbon border tax,” a move some critics warn could result in a domestic carbon tax.

Senators Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), and Bill Cassidy (R-La.) are cosponsoring the “Providing Reliable, Objective, Verifiable Emissions Intensity and Transparency (PROVE IT) Act,” which calls for the government to study the carbon emissions of products produced in both the United States and foreign countries. Other cosponsors of [S. 1863](#), introduced Wednesday, are Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.), Angus King (I-Maine), Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), and John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.).

The PROVE IT Act would require the Department of Energy, along with several other federal agencies, to conduct a two-year study (to be updated every five years thereafter) on the “emissions intensity” of the production of a variety of “covered products” including aluminum, crude and refined oil, iron, steel, paper, solar cells, and wind turbines. The idea is to compare the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by domestic production of these products to that emitted by foreign production.

While the bill only calls for a study, “the senators’ goal is to impose fees on iron, steel and other imports from China and other countries that are not significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions,” reported the *Post*.

“Using trade to advance American manufacturing — and to disadvantage dirty or high-emissions products — is ultimately the only way we’re going to put effective pressure on China, Russia and India to dramatically reduce their emissions,” Coons told the *Post*.

Coons told [E&E News](#) that “figuring out a fair process for imposing tariffs on countries that don’t have any transparency around their emissions is also going to be a complex part of any border carbon adjustment mechanism,” and the PROVE IT Act will “lay the foundation for the rest of the conversation.”

One would expect Democrats to be firmly on the side of anything that allegedly mitigates so-called climate change, but the key to getting Republicans — albeit moderate-to-liberal ones at this point — on board appears to be “the idea of taxing imports from foreign adversaries,” noted the *Post*.

“We spend so much time as Republicans saying hell no to people who want to tax carbon or want to somehow decarbonize,” Cramer told the paper. “But the whole ‘America First’ movement and agenda is



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a comfortable place for Republicans. So this is the low-hanging fruit of climate policy or trade policy or whatever you want to call it.”

Cassidy, for his part, told E&E News “that he was looking at ‘early July’ for introduction of what is expected to be the first comprehensive, Republican-led [carbon tariff] bill, which he will call the ‘Foreign Pollution Act.’”

Another attraction for Republicans is the fact that the European Union recently passed its own carbon tariff, which will affect American exports to the EU.

“The Republican members [of Congress] I’ve met with, their view is the U.S. should have its own opinion about what the carbon intensity of our products are,” Climate Leadership Council CEO Greg Bertelsen told E&E News.

There are those individuals, however, who view the PROVE IT Act as the first step toward a domestic carbon tax. [Dan Kish](#), a senior fellow at the conservative Institute for Energy Research, told the Daily Caller that carbon tariffs would provide a “license for politicians” to impose similar taxes domestically. And columnist [Michael McKenna](#) declared that “the process will lead inevitably to the federal government setting a price for carbon dioxide in these United States,” which “means only one thing: a nationwide tax on carbon dioxide.”

Indeed, Cramer practically admitted as much in his remarks to E&E News. “It’s easier to take a second step once you’ve taken a first step,” he said. “It can create a little momentum, but at the very least it creates a baseline from which to work, and it gets people thinking about it in a different context than, ‘Oh, my God, it’s a carbon tax.’”

“Cramer knows what he is proposing will in fact lead us directly to a carbon dioxide/energy tax,” observed McKenna. “He’s counting on voters to be too stupid or too distracted to realize that.”



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