

## US House passes key climate bill



Obama said the bill could create new industries and decreased dependency on foreign oil [Reuters]

The US House of Representatives has passed legislation to slash industrial pollution blamed for global warming.

The House passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act, a top priority for Barack Obama, the US president, by a vote of 219-212 on Friday.

Only eight Republicans joined Democrats in favour of the bill.

The Senate, which still needs to approve the legislation, is expected to try to write its own version of a climate change bill, but prospects for this year were uncertain.

"It's a bold and necessary step that holds the promise of creating new industries and millions of new jobs, decreasing our dangerous dependence on foreign oil," Obama said after the bill was passed on Friday.

"Now it's up to the Senate to take the next step."

The House-passed bill requires that large US companies, including utilities, oil refiners, manufacturers and others, to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases associated with global warming by 17 per cent by 2020 and 83 per cent by 2050, from 2005 levels.

They would do so by phasing in the use of cleaner alternative energy than high-polluting oil and coal.

"The scientists are telling us there's an overwhelming consensus ... global warming is real and it's moving very rapidly," Henry Waxman, the House energy and commerce committee chairman, and chief sponsor of the legislation, said.

Dependency reduction

In urging its passage, Waxman also said the legislation would create jobs and help move the United States from its reliance on foreign oil.

But Republicans said the bill was a behemoth that would neither effectively help the environment nor improve an economy reeling from a deep recession.

John Boehner, the House Republican leader, called the measure "the biggest job-killing bill that has ever been on the floor of the House of Representatives".

Joe Barton, a senior House Republican on the energy panel, said the measure would set unrealistic targets for cutting carbon pollution.

"You would have to reduce emissions in the United States to the level that we had in 1910," Barton said.

At the core of the bill, which is around 1,500 pages long, is a "cap and trade" program designed to achieve the emissions reductions by industry.

Under the plan, the government would issue a declining number of pollution permits to companies, which could sell those permits to each other as needed.

Mary Nichols, California's most senior climate official, said: "The federal government will be joining California in the effort to combat global warming and the framework for doing it is one that is very similar to the one that California has adopted."

California is recognised as having the most aggressive plan to fight global warming in the United States.