

Boxer makes one last push for climate-change agenda

By Carolyn
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Sen. Barbara Boxer

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Sen. [Barbara Boxer](#) opened a push Tuesday for a bipartisan bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the handful of days before she forfeits the gavel of the Senate's [Environment and Public Works Committee](#) to a Republican who wrote a book calling climate change a hoax.

Incoming committee Chairman Sen. [James Inhofe](#) of Oklahoma is expected to lead an attack on President Obama's main antiglobal-warming measure, a rule that would reduce carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants. Boxer said Republicans will have enough votes come January to pass legislation to try to thwart the new rule, but promised that Obama would veto any such attempt.

In the meantime, the [California Democrat](#) has scheduled a busy two weeks of hearings in the lame-duck session of Congress before she steps down to the minority. The legislation she pushed Tuesday is a bill by Sens. [Chris Murphy](#), D-Conn., and [Susan Collins](#), R-Maine, that would use existing federal authority to require cuts in emissions of three potent greenhouse gases — soot, methane and hydrofluorocarbons — which scientists testified would both reduce global warming and improve public health.

Murphy said that although carbon dioxide is the most abundant greenhouse gas, several others such as methane are 10 to 100 times more potent. He cited estimates that reducing methane, soot and hydrocarbons could cut the rate of



global warming by half over the next 40 years.

Murphy said reducing the three big “superpollutants” is “an opportunity for bipartisan cooperation on climate and public health.”

[Durwood Zaelke](#), president of the [Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development](#), called the legislation a “bipartisan on-ramp” to begin to tackle global warming, because reducing the three gases is cheaper and easier than cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

“Solving climate change is hard, but getting started is easy,” Zaelke said, pointing to a 90 percent reduction in soot achieved already by California. Soot, or black carbon, is produced by diesel engines and other fossil fuel combustion and is a major component of smog, which Zaelke said causes 7 million deaths worldwide annually.

[Drew Shindell](#), a professor of climate science at [Duke University](#), said smog from soot and methane emissions, which come primarily from livestock production, city dumps and leaks from natural gas extraction, causes 100 million tons of crop losses in the United States alone each year.

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