

Much has been made about a potential feud between White House Economic Advisor Larry Summers and White House Energy and Climate Advisor Carol Browner over how fast to cut carbon emissions. Summers has been vocal in expressing concerns over the economic effects of a tough climate policy. Browner, by contrast, is a strong advocate for aggressive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Overlooked in press accounts of the feud is an interesting staffing choice. Joe Aldy, who has spent the past several years analyzing climate policy for highly respected Resources for the Future, is now working for both Browner and Summers in the White House, spending half his time advising each. Aldy will likely have influence with both. He's a Harvard-trained economist and thus shares Summers' academic training. He's also an aggressive advocate of curbing greenhouse gas emissions through a cap and trade scheme, consistent with President Obama's stated climate policy. Together with Harvard Law Professor Jody Freeman, there's serious intellectual firepower in the White House that ought to influence and counterbalance any skepticism Summers has about tough carbon emissions cuts.