Both the NY Times and the Washington Post had lead stories on the politics of climate change legislation. The Post's story centered on the increasing focus of the debate on the economic impact of climate legislation and on the difficulty of establishing the facts:

> In anticipation, groups on the left and the right — as well as government outfits such as the Environmental Protection Agency and Congressional Budget Office — have issued a spate of analyses projecting the costs and, sometimes, the benefits of congressional climate legislation. But the fine print in many of these projections reveals that they are based on assumptions that could easily turn out otherwise, meaning lawmakers will have to take a leap of faith about how a cap-and-trade program — which would control pollution by providing economic incentives to reduce emissions — might affect the economy.

It seems to me that the "high cost" estimates are implausible on political rather than economic grounds — if the legislation turns out to cause large unemployment or price spikes for consumers, it will be speedily modified. In addition, history shows that all environmental legislation has been accompanied by similar alarmist warnings, which haven't come to pass.

The Times lead with a story about the Obama Administration's increased efforts to advance legislation. Opponents complain about the cost of the legislation, but also that the bill is so complex and that Congress is being asked to acted too quickly. (If this were not a serious academic blog, I would had "haha" or a smiley face at this point.)

I have some sympathy with complaints that the bill is too complex and needs more study — but only a limited amount. The bill is so complex largely because of the need to accommodate the same parochial interests that are now whining about its complexity, and we would never pass any legislation on any subject if waited until we had finished studying the problem.

There is something to be said for the approach that California took with AB 32 — identify the goal, provide a bit of guidance about means, and turn the details over to an administrative agency. But I don't see anyone in Congress advocating that way of cutting the Gordian knot.

It's very hard to gauge the legislative situation from the outside. How many of the complaints are real, and how many are simply bargaining ploys? No way of knowing,

really. But I have the sense that much of what we are hearing in public is only loosely connected with whatever serious deal-making is takng place behind the scenes.