

President Obama's [failure at the G-8 summit](#) to get the largest developing countries to agree to set goals to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 was only one piece of bad news this week for efforts to attack global warming. Although the House of Representatives narrowly passed the Waxman-Markey bill last week, prospects in the Senate are looking grimmer. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) [announced yesterday](#) that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which she chairs, will not vote on climate change legislation until at least September. Boxer explained that the Senate has its hands full with health care legislation and the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Judge Sotomayor. And a Democratic Senator from a coal-dependent state, Claire McCaskill, [told a radio host this week](#) that the Senate will not pass Waxman-Markey. (Holly [previously posted](#) about Nate Silver's predictions about Senate votes; Silver has McCaskill as a ["Likely Yes"](#) vote). Moreover the unwillingness of China and other fast-growing developing countries to commit to 2050 goals can't be helpful in persuading reluctant Senators to vote to reduce U.S. emissions — after all, it was the Kyoto Protocol's differential treatment between "developed" and "developing" countries that led the U.S. Senate to pass a [resolution](#) urging President Clinton not to sign the protocol.

All of this bad news seems especially troubling for efforts to sign a new international climate treaty (Kyoto expires in 2012) in Copenhagen in December. The head of the United Nations' International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has [described](#) the U.S. role as "absolutely critical to the success of Copenhagen." It's hard to imagine how Obama can make progress on the gap between developing and developed countries if he can't persuade his own Congress to cut U.S. emissions. And prospects for Senate passage don't appear great.