



Where have you gone, Senator Graham?

We hardly knew ye (in the Senate, anyway). [Reports indicate](#) that Senate Democrats will be scaling back their energy legislation to a bill that addresses oil well leaks and energy efficiency, but nothing on carbon emission more generally. In many ways, the failure of comprehensive energy reform can be traced to two things: 1) health care reform taking up so much of the agenda for too long, making other comprehensive reforms less likely, and 2) the politically unpalatable nature of cap-and-trade as a central piece of the solution. A third reason is total Republican opposition, but you almost have to take that for granted with any Obama initiative.

Given the uncertainty surrounding cap-and-trade as an effective mechanism for controlling emissions, and the apparent impossibility of instituting a carbon tax, I would have preferred an approach involving strong national renewable energy standards, fees on polluters to fund energy innovation, and comprehensive transportation reform that re-prioritizes our highway/mass transit spending ratios (i.e., actually spending money on mass transit instead of highways). Those steps would have gone a long way to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and may have made more sense to voters.

In the short term, environmentalists will have to rely on EPA regulation (when and if) and state efforts like California's. Otherwise, it's more wait-and-see.