

SNL Blogs



Monday, July 26, 2010 3:17 PM ET

What we have here is a failure to legislate

By [Jay Hodgkins](#)

The writing has been on the wall, but when it comes to making an effort to pass climate change legislation in 2010, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., on July 22 folded up his tent, took his ball and went home, put the final nail in the coffin, told the fat lady to start singing — pick your euphemism of choice.

*Despite 2010 being what most observers called the best chance in history to get federal carbon cap-and-trade passed in the United States and what many more fatalistic observers called perhaps the last real chance for several years ahead to pass such a bill, Reid admitted that he and other climate bill sympathizer Democrats in the Senate **could not rally** the 60 votes needed to pass comprehensive climate change and energy legislation.*

*Through a year of opportunities to pass climate legislation that were both seized and completely missed, where intense lobbying from agriculture, energy, transportation and pretty much every sector of the economy made sending public letters to Congress as **en vogue as 3-D movies**, I decided this latest and most cathartic turn in the climate saga deserved our own letter to thank Congress on behalf of all journalists for all the good times, bad times and memories of the past year.*

Dear Congress,

On behalf of energy and environment journalists across our great nation, thank you for failing to pass any of the four major comprehensive climate bills that crossed your path this year.

Thank you not only for **supporting the population** of yellow-bellied marmots, but for giving us the opportunity to write about yellow-bellied marmots. Who wouldn't want to write a story about cute, furry little ground mammals getting 10% fatter and 300% more prolific in a matter of one decade thanks to warmer temperatures and the shortening of their hibernation cycles?

You are not thanked, however, for global warming allegedly having much the **same effect on poison ivy**, which is now more potent, more robust and spreading like a never-before-seen wildfire.

When we are elbow-deep in marmots and poison ivy, any measure to provide production tax credits for poison ivy medication manufacturers or tax breaks for families' increased poison ivy treatment costs will be greatly appreciated. Just like the majority of us who suffer from weepy, itchy poison ivy rashes because we have no idea what the plant looks like, we understand you're big on treating symptoms and not the causes of our nation's woes.

Thank you for doing your part to keep the most dramatic predictions of global sea level rise in play. Many of my colleagues here at SNL Energy enjoy the beach and, according to a new study released by the U.K. government on Google Earth **modeling sea level rise** in the event of a 4-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures, the beach is going to be making its way much closer to our Charlottesville, Va., corporate headquarters. But mid-Atlantic beachgoers should probably start investing in aqua socks — Baltimore and Norfolk, Va., can be pretty pointy.

A special thank you goes to coal state Senate Democrats, who are every bit as responsible as "Just Say No" Senate Republicans for the failure to pass climate legislation. Your tiny minority has managed to completely quash a nearly foolproof blue majority of 59 Senate seats. Your refusal to envision any economic future for your states

beyond coal, much less a clean energy manufacturing and technology future, successfully stopped your party's figurehead, President Barack Obama, from completing his campaign promise triple crown (Health care and financial reform being the other two legs, of course). A nearly impregnable Democratic Senate majority being held hostage by their coal state colleagues on climate would be like the entire village of male Smurfs having to put up with Gargamel trying to melt them down into a potion to make gold because Smurfette had started going out with him.

By the way, Congress, keep an eye out for the [Smurfs in 3-D](#), coming to a theater near you in summer 2011.

Mostly, Congress, thank you for keeping so many energy and environment journalists employed these last few years. In such trying times for our economy and the news industry, you have provided an endless catacomb of stories on confused carbon emitters, flailing clean energy companies, people who do believe in climate change, people who don't believe in climate change, scenarios for what will happen if a bill is passed, scenarios for what will happen if action is not taken and everything in between. While the nation's unemployment hovers around 10%, we're pretty much booked solid. We've got enough material to fill our editors' budgets until the next economic bubble bursts.

Speaking of jobs, thank you for showing the rest of the nation the playbook for taking off the last six months of every two years while still keeping your job.

Journalists, energy industry observers and senators alike have succumbed to the conventional wisdom that passing a climate bill is not even remotely feasible once Congress breaks for its August recess. The fact that Congress has created a generally accepted standard that allows it to stop legislating from August through early November — a full quarter of the year — because making a decision might be too politically damaging, and then continue not legislating through January — a grand total of six months, or 25% of the two-year Congressional session — because it is apparently improper to do anything important while lame ducks are still sitting in office is, frankly, amazing.

No wonder one of the few things the 111th Congress has been pretty good at doing is extending unemployment benefits — you folks can clearly empathize with the concept of getting paid to not work.

For all these reasons and more, Congress, thank you for failing to pass climate legislation. We'll see you again next year, but please don't be angry if we pay more attention to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to regulate carbon.

Yours truly,

A concerned journalist