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EDITORIAL

# The Senate's Chance on Warming

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For seven long years, President Bush has refused to confront the challenge of climate change and provide the leadership that this country and the world needs to reduce greenhouse gases and avoid the destructive consequences of global warming.

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The Senate, and all three presidential candidates, have a chance to provide that leadership. Next week, the Senate is scheduled to take up a bill sponsored by John Warner, the Virginia Republican, and Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut independent, that seeks aggressively to reduce emissions from all sectors of the economy.

Mr. Bush, predictably, opposes the bill. Add that to the slim Democratic majority and the complexity of the bill itself, and the chances of getting 60 filibuster-proof votes are modest at best. Even so, a majority vote would create positive momentum for the next Congress and send a strong signal to the country and the world that help on this issue is on the way.

For that reason, it is crucial for John McCain, Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton to show up and vote for this bill. All are on record as supporting mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases. A pressing campaign schedule is no excuse for not being counted on an issue this important to the nation's future.

The Senate last addressed climate change in 2003 when it cast 43 votes in favor of a bill sponsored by Mr. McCain and Mr. Lieberman. This bill is even more ambitious. It calls for a 70 percent reduction in emissions by 2050 — requiring, in turn, a huge change in the way the country creates, delivers and uses energy. It imposes a price on carbon to make sure that happens. It also creates a compelling array of incentives for new and cleaner technologies and offers ways to combat long-neglected problems like deforestation.

Since that 2003 vote, the arguments for action have only gotten stronger. Mr. Bush has left a deep-seated impression that mandatory cuts in carbon dioxide would bankrupt the country or at the very least severely damage it by driving energy prices through the roof.

Every serious study shows that this is simply not true and that a well-designed, market-based program could yield positive economic gains — greater energy efficiency, technological innovation and reduced reliance on foreign oil. The same studies also make clear that the costs of inaction will dwarf the costs of acting now. The bill's proponents must make sure that the economics of this debate are framed in a positive way.

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The scientific case for action, strong five years ago, is even more persuasive now. Authoritative assessments from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, among other studies, have left little doubt that the world is heating up, that man-made emissions are largely responsible and that swift action is necessary to avoid widespread environmental damage.



Mr. Bush can no longer plausibly deny the science. What he continues to resist is the need for a full-throated response. The Senate can usher in a new era of American leadership when it convenes next week.

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