

Lankford Opposes Carbon Tax

EDMOND – Congressman James Lankford will not support any effort to place a carbon tax on the backs of the American people, he said. A carbon tax is not a fair solution for Congress to use to pay down the national debt, Lankford told The Edmond Sun.

President Barack Obama signed a carbon tax bill in November that bars U.S. airlines from a European carbon emissions fee. Cap-and-trade legislation in 2009 came to a dead-end in the U.S. Senate after barely passing in the House. Many Republicans believe that the president will support a carbon tax in his second term.

“There are a number of descriptions for a carbon tax, none of which are mutually exclusive,” said Jim Roth, an attorney for the law firm of Phillips Murrah. A former corporation commissioner, Roth is a member of the firm’s Energy & Natural Resources practice group and is chairman of the Alternative “Green” Energy practice group. He is also president of A New Energy LLC, which consults on energy and environmental matters.

“There’s economy-wide carbon taxes where there’s a way to assess and ascertain the amount of carbon in a process or in an emission,” Roth said. “Then there’s a more specific carbon tax that is focused on a particular sector, or industries within sectors.”

A carbon tax can make those responsible for the greatest amount of pollution financially accountable, said Roth, D-Oklahoma City.

A carbon tax is a way to raise taxes without raising tax rates, Lankford said.

“It does the exact same thing; it raises the cost, and it hits

especially hard those that are in poverty and senior adults that are on fixed incomes,” said Lankford, R-Edmond. Everything Americans purchase is energy related, whether it be in production or transportation, he said.

The poor cannot afford to pay more for electricity, gasoline and medicines because of a carbon tax, Lankford said. A carbon tax would inflate the price of plastics and fertilizers for farms, he said. All agricultural products would increase in cost. That does not help the economy, Lankford said.

“People who claim through fear language that a carbon tax will kill the economy are not being intellectually honest about the fact that we Americans are already paying for the devastating effects of unanswered climate change,” Roth said.

Roth said a targeted legal effort to assess penalties to polluters could attach those expenses to them and not allow them to pass it along to vulnerable socioeconomic groups.

“Here in Oklahoma, the largest polluters are our state’s coal plants,” Roth said. “So why should we allow a utility to suffer the cost of its decisions to pollute by passing those on in rates to seniors?”

Roth said the polluter’s health care cost to low income people could be saved if the Corporation Commission would tell the coal industry to clean up its act, and promote clean natural gas and Oklahoma wind.

Roth said \$60 billion of relief for Hurricane Sandy is an example of Americans paying for climate change. The cost of freight on the Mississippi River is impacted by climate change, he said. Crops in Oklahoma were devastated by drought last year during America’s hottest year in recorded history, Roth said.

“I think it’s pretty clear that we need a solution for the effects that are impacting climate change and causing

disaster," Roth said.

Geological evidence and the ancient Ice Age is evidence that climate change has occurred on Earth long before the modern age adopted fossil fuels, Lankford said.

Roth said that 95 percent to 97 percent of the world's scientists that study climate change agree climate change is real, Roth said. These scientists, including workers at NASA and members of the National Academy of Sciences, also agree that human pollution behavior contributes to climate change while accelerating its impact. They do not disagree that climate change has happened before, he added.

"I'm talking scientists that have actually gotten degrees and not politicians that are seeking talking points," Roth said.

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe has advocated for repealing funding of climate change and global warming related activities. Doing so would save \$83 billion, Inhofe said. President Obama is using Environmental Protection Agency regulations to accomplish what the administration couldn't with failure to pass cap-and-trade legislation, Inhofe has said.

Restricting all greenhouse gases in the United States would not reduce the CO₂ greenhouse gases worldwide, Inhofe told The Sun in 2011.

"What it would do is to chase our jobs to other countries like China, India and Mexico where they don't have any restrictions on emissions," Inhofe said.

Lankford said consumer prices have steadily increased in the U.S. as a result of its environmental standards that are among the highest on earth. Due to more production and decreased cost of natural gas, the U.S. carbon emissions already meet the Kyoto Protocol benchmarks without the U.S. formally signing the document, Lankford said.

“In the rush to do ‘something’ about carbon, we should not crush our economy and punish people on fixed incomes who can least afford yet another hidden tax,” Lankford said.