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New Estimates on Senate Carbon Dioxide Emissions Plan

By JENNIFER 8. LEE

WASHINGTON, July 29 - An internal analysis by Environmental Protection Agency economists has found that a Senate plan to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions linked to global warming could achieve its goal at very little cost, according to a copy of the analysis made available by a group supporting the plan.

This stands in contrast to public statements by Bush administration officials saying the environmental benefits of the plan, which sets limits on emissions of so-called greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, would come at a significant cost to the nation's economy.

The results of the environmental agency analysis, dated May 23, were never completed and analysts were told not to continue with the study, employees at the agency said. In June, Christie Whitman, who was then the agency's administrator, sent a letter refusing to carry out the study to the proposal's sponsors, Senators John McCain, Republican of Arizona, and Joseph I. Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut.

In the letter, Mrs. Whitman wrote that the Energy Department's independent statistical office, the Energy Information Agency, was already doing an analysis and "based on past analyses, I would expect that E.I.A.'s cost estimates should not be significantly different from the estimates that E.P.A. would have produced."

But the results do appear to diverge significantly. The Energy Department projects economic harm dozens of times that projected in the internal environmental agency results. The department study says the economy will be reduced by \$106 billion, or six-tenths of 1 percent, in 2025. The E.P.A. results put those losses at from \$1 billion to \$2 billion, or one-hundredth of 1 percent.

Environmental agency officials emphasized that the analysis was preliminary and incomplete.

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