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QUESTIONS FOR SENATOR HELMS

The greenhouse gas projections used by the United States delegation in Kyoto, including all 6 major greenhouse gases and projections through 2010 should be provided by Bill Hohenstein, EPA.

Question: Please provide the methodology to support the Administration's contention that the Kyoto Protocol agreement calls for a reduction of 2-3 percent below 1990 emission levels rather than the 7 percent seemingly called for in the agreement.

When the President announced the Administration's proposal for reducing greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2008-2012 in October, this target implicitly assumed that all six major greenhouse gases were included in the target and that all sinks were accounted for both in 1990 and in the commitment period (2008-2012).

The Kyoto Protocol permits countries to elect to use 1995 emissions levels for three synthetic greenhouse gases (hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride). It also has a different accounting system for sinks than that contemplated in the President's proposed position.

WRONG
NUMBER

Using the 1995 baseline instead of 1990 for the three synthetic greenhouse gases increases the United States target by almost 10 million tons, making the ultimate target less stringent by this amount.

higher in other
calculations

13

Using the Kyoto Protocol accounting method for sinks means that sink activity is not included in the 1990 baseline period. Given the new IPCC methodology for sink accounting (basically the inclusion of soil carbons), this means that the target for the United States is about 50-55 million tons less stringent than under the President's proposed position. (Under the older, pre-October, IPCC methodology, this change would have made the United States target about 16 million tons less stringent.) The Kyoto Protocol permits countries to count carbon sequestration through certain specified activities -- afforestation, reforestation, and deforestation. The Administration is working to determine the size of the opportunities for carbon sequestration under these activities, but they could make the Kyoto Protocol target somewhat easier to meet, because the United States does not have much deforestation activity projected for the 2008-2012 timeframe.

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1200

"net"

Taken together, the two changes detailed above indicate that the Kyoto Protocol accounting system makes the overall target about 60-65 million tons less stringent than if the accounting system underlying the President's proposed position were used. Given that 15 million tons equate to about 1 percentage point, the different accounting system reduces the effort needed to meet the emissions reduction target by at least 4 percentage points. Subtracting these 4 percentage points from the advertised Kyoto Protocol target leads to the conclusion that the agreement is only a couple percentage points more stringent than the President's October proposal.

[Note: This answer also may be used in the Hagel set of questions.]