**In rare bipartisan climate agreement, senators forge plan to slash use of potent greenhouse gas**

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In a rare show of defiance of the Trump administration, key Senate Republicans joined Democrats on Thursday in agreeing to phase out[chemicals widely used in air conditioners and refrigeration](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/us-china-agree-to-work-on-phasing-out-hydrofluorocarbons/2013/09/06/9037e072-170c-11e3-a2ec-b47e45e6f8ef_story.html?itid=lk_inline_manual_2) that are warming the planet.

Despite the Trump administration’s refusal to join a global agreement to reduce hydrofluorocarbons, which are among the world’s most potent drivers of climate change, a [push by U.S. firms and environmentalists](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-energy-202/2018/07/12/the-energy-202-republicans-can-t-agree-on-this-climate-deal-brokered-by-obama/5b461d261b326b3348adde4c/?itid=lk_inline_manual_4) appears to have swayed lawmakers.

“This agreement protects both American consumers and American businesses,” said Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee. “We can have clean air without damaging our economy."

The proposed phase-down will be offered as an amendment to a bipartisan energy bill, though it is unclear whether it will clear both chambers and be signed into law by President Trump before Congress adjourns in January.

An unusual coalition of business and environmental groups — including the National Association of Manufacturers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, FreedomWorks and the Natural Resources Defense Council — have been pushing Trump administration officials for months to support [the Kigali Amendment](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/03/140-countries-will-now-phase-out-hfcs-what-are-these-and-why-do-they-matter/?itid=lk_inline_manual_9), a 2016 agreement by nearly 200 countries to slash the use of a group of organic compounds that deplete the ozone layer and drive global warming. Some conservative organizations, including the Heritage Foundation and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, have sought to block Senate approval of the treaty.

The proposed legislation would closely mirror the requirements of the Kigali Amendment. A spokesman for the White House declined to comment.

Hydrofluorocarbons, also known at HFCs, are used in nearly every American household to cool everything from refrigerators to cars. They were widely introduced three decades ago as a substitute for chlorofluorocarbons, a different set of chemicals that were depleting Earth’s ozone layer. While that helped repair the ozone layer, scientists have identified HFCs as a significant driver of climate change — thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide. Cutting these emissions, one of the fastest-growing greenhouse gases in the United States, could avert a 0.5-degree Celsius (0.9-degree Fahrenheit) global temperature rise by the end of the century.

Barrasso joined Thursday with Sens. Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.) and John Neely Kennedy (R-La.) in proposing to phase out the production and importation of HFCs by 85 percent over the next 15 years. That would put the United States on a path to meet the targets outlined under the Kigali Amendment, which modifies the 1987 Montreal Protocol, an international treaty to preserve the ozone layer.

“This amendment would spur billions of dollars of economic growth in domestic manufacturing and create tens of thousands of new jobs, all while helping our planet avoid half a degree Celsius in global warming,” Carper said in a statement. “At a time when we could all use some good news, this is great news for our economy and our planet. Let’s get it done.”

Environmental advocates, meanwhile, celebrated the possibility of retiring a class of chemicals that is contributing to the climate crisis.

David Doniger, senior strategic director of the Natural Resources Defense Council’s climate and clean energy program, called the proposal “a major breakthrough.”

“It sends a strong signal that these climate-damaging chemicals are on their way out, and safer alternatives are on the way in,” Doniger said in a phone interview.

[Durwood Zaelke](https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/cooling-systems-that-slow-global-warming-by-durwood-zaelke-and-mario-molina-2020-09), president of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, called the bipartisan deal “remarkable.”

As the planet warms, [the demand for air conditioning is growing globally](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/world/climate-environment/climate-change-qatar-air-conditioning-outdoors/?itid=lk_inline_manual_41), and countries such as India and China have adopted plans to increase energy efficiency and use less harmful refrigerants. China, the world’s largest producer of HFCs, is in the process of curbing their use and is poised to join 101 other countries that have ratified the Kigali Amendment since it was first adopted by an initial group of 20 nations.

Zaelke noted that French President Emmanuel Macron held meetings at last year’s G-7 summit to ensure that both China and India moved ahead with plans to curb their use of these super-pollutants. “On the global level, the world has moved ahead on the Kigali Amendment,” Zaelke said.