



National Conference of State Legislatures

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A Federal Information Service of the
NCSL Standing Committee on Environment

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From Congress

7/24/2012: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved the *Safe Chemicals Act* ([S. 847](#)), which would require disclosure to the federal government test results proving that flame retardants and other chemical products are safe to keep them on the market. This was the first Senate Committee vote ever to reform the *Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976* since it was enacted.

7/24/2012: The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy approved via voice vote legislation ([S. 710](#)) that would require the EPA to establish a hazardous waste electronic manifest system within three years of enactment.

7/26/2012: Senate Republicans introduced their version of the Domestic Energy and Jobs Act ([S.3445](#)). This legislation, which is similar to a package with the same name that was passed by the House in June ([HR 4480](#)), simplifies and quickens the permit process for companies using federal land for the production of oil and gas, and sets production goals for a variety of resources on public lands.

7/26/2012: The House passed the *Red Tape Reduction Act* ([HR 4078](#)), which aims to scale back federal regulations and save the government money, though the [Congressional Budget Office](#) is unsure whether the measure would save or cost money.

7/31/2012: The Senate Commerce Committee approved the European Union (EU) Emissions Trading Scheme Prohibition Act ([S. 1956](#)), which would make it illegal for U.S. airlines to follow an EU law that requires all airlines flying into or out of the continent to comply with the EU's cap-and-trade restrictions on greenhouse-gas emissions.

8/1/2012: The Farmers Undertake Environmental Lands Stewardship (FUELS) Act ([HR 3158](#)) passed in the House. The bill would direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase from 1,320 gallons to 10,000 gallons the level at which a farmer can store fuel in single containers without violating EPA spill prevention guidelines.

8/1/2012: Senator Bingaman (NM) introduced the "Nuclear Waste Administration Act ([S. 3469](#)), which is draft legislation to enact recommendations from the final report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future.

8/2/2012: The House adopted the *Agricultural Assistance Act* ([HR 6233](#)) authorizing over \$380 million in supplemental agricultural disaster assistance for losses in fiscal 2012. The bill would offset the cost of the supplemental assistance by reducing the

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Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

8/2/2012: The House passed the “Marine Debris Act Amendments” ([HR 1171](#)), which would reauthorize the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration program to identify sources and prevent the occurrence of marine debris with authorization of \$4.9 million for each fiscal year through 2015.

8/7/2012: Twenty-six Senators wrote a bipartisan [letter](#) to EPA asking the agency for short term accommodations on the federal corn ethanol mandate in response to the drought causing corn prices to drop. This follows an August 1 [letter](#) sent by 156 members of the House making a similar request for EPA to waive the requirement due to drought conditions.

From the Administration

7/24/2012: The Obama administration [finalized a plan](#) to accelerate development of commercial solar projects on public lands in the Southwest. The plan provides incentives for projects on more than a quarter-million acres of "solar energy zones" in six states while allowing development on an additional 19 million acres.

From the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

7/20/2012: The EPA is [reviewing](#) part of the Utility MACT rule, which set the first federal standards to reduce toxic air pollution from power plants. The rule targets mercury and other toxic pollutants from coal-fired power plants. The technical review is intended to clarify how the new standards would apply to five plants proposed in Texas, Georgia, Kansas and Utah.

7/26/2012: EPA announced that they are extending the timeline to June 27, 2013 to finalize [new rules](#) designed to reduce the impacts caused by power plant cooling-water intakes. The additional time was needed to complete the EPA's analysis of public comments, data and options related to the new rules.

From the Internal Revenue Service

6/25/2012: The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released guidance regarding certain qualified conservation purposes eligible for financing with qualified energy conservation bonds (QECBs). The IRS hopes the guidance will make it easier for state and local governments to access more than \$2 billion in existing low-cost financing to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects through QECBs.

From the Agriculture Department

7/11/2012: Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced](#) several ways in which conservation programs will become more flexible to help farmers deal with the drought including changes to the Conservation Reserve Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

7/18/2012: The Department of Agriculture (USDA) [designated](#) 39 additional counties in eight states as primary natural disaster areas due to damage and losses caused by drought and excessive heat.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

7/24/2012: Four out of five of the commissioners of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission testified before two House Energy and Commerce subcommittees. This was the first appearance of new chairwoman, Allison Macfarlane.

Additional Resources and Reports of Interest

6/22/2012: A GAO [report](#) found that EPA's failure to keep complete, updated information on New Source Review permits for power plants which burn fossil fuels raises questions about the effectiveness of the Clean Air Act program.

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7/19/2012: The Bipartisan Policy Center's Nuclear Initiative released a [report](#) titled, "Maintaining U.S. Leadership in Global Nuclear Energy Markets." The report summarizes the major insights from four public events featuring a range of experts focusing on nuclear energy's future in the United States, and outlines five strategic goals for maintaining U.S. leadership in nuclear energy.

7/27/2012 The Energy Information Administration [reports](#) that a record number of coal plants will retire over the next five years. The nine gigawatts of coal-fired generation expected to close this year will be the largest decline in history.

New Resources from NCSL

Material from the NCSL 2012 Legislative Summit is now available including a compilation of [online resources](#) as well as all adopted policy directives and resolutions including those under the jurisdiction of the [Environment Committee](#).