

Bipartisan HFC Bill Launched in House, Matching Senate Plan

January 08, 2020 David Doniger

Two Democrats and two Republicans introduced legislation last night in the U.S. House of Representatives to phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) – the powerful heat-trapping chemicals used in air conditioning, refrigeration, and other products – and replace them with climate-friendlier alternatives.

The new bill, the [American Innovation and Manufacturing Leadership Act \(H.R. 5544\)](#), is sponsored by Reps. Paul Tonko (D-NY), Pete Olson (R-TX), Scott Peters (D-CA), and Elise Stefanik (R-NY).

Heralding quick action in the new year, leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee [announced](#) a subcommittee hearing on the bill on January 14th. (I'll testify for NRDC.)



Like the companion [bipartisan Senate bill](#) (which currently has 32 cosponsors drawn equally from both parties) the House legislation enjoys backing ranging from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the Natural Resources Defense Council. The two bills show that industry, environmentalists, and lawmakers can work together to phase down harmful HFCs and help the United States maintain its leadership in replacing them with climate-friendlier chemicals and more energy-efficient products.

NRDC has worked for more than a decade to replace HFCs. They were an initial substitute for CFCs, which gravely damaged the earth's protective ozone layer and packed, pound for pound, thousands of times the heat-trapping punch of carbon dioxide. HFCs, however, also contribute powerfully to climate change, and now we have safer options.

Industry supporters of the House and Senate bills include the [Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute](#) (AHRI) and the [Alliance for Responsible Atmospheric Policy](#), representing chemical companies and product manufacturers that make and use HFCs

now. These companies have brought to market a host of HFC alternatives and products that use them. In addition to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the bills have the support of the National Association of Manufacturers, and other trade groups and companies. Health and environmental groups are joining NRDC in support as well.

The House and Senate bills follow the same approach we've used over three decades to eliminate CFCs and HCFCs, the HFCs' ozone-destroying predecessors. Now, as then, U.S. legislation will work alongside the Montreal Protocol, the world's most successful environmental treaty, which was adopted under President Ronald Reagan and has enjoyed the backing of all presidents since then. The bills phase down production and import of HFCs over 15 years, with provisions for acceleration as alternatives come on line. The bills will also cut HFC leakage when equipment is serviced or discarded, and replace them in end uses where there are better substitutes.

Both industry and environmentalists want the U.S. to get started under this legislation without delay. A worldwide HFC transition will deliver huge climate benefits, avoiding as much as another half degree Celsius (nearly a degree Fahrenheit) of dangerous warming. Industry [forecasts](#) that the HFC phasedown will create 33,000 American jobs and will increase U.S. exports by \$5 billion over the next decade. The legislation will help American companies parlay their technological leadership and competitive edge in world markets, and it will stop others from dumping HFCs in the U.S. American consumers won't see higher costs, especially considering savings from greater energy efficiency.

With strong support across the political spectrum, this is a win-win for climate and the economy that we can get done in this Congress.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

