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Bush Climate Programs Fuel Dispute

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- The White House says it will turn over a 50-page budget-related report on climate change to Congress, but only after House Democrats demanded a full accounting.

Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., and 35 other Democrats had told White House budget director Mitch Daniels he must turn over any budget and planning documents related to the Bush administration's policies on global warming.

Bush spokesman Scott McLellan said the Office of Management and Budget would "in the very near future" honor that obligation.

"OMB is already in the final stages of pulling together all the information and it will be on its way to Congress in short order," he said late Wednesday. "It's a 50-page document and OMB is just crossing the t's and dotting the i's."

Democrats had sent a letter earlier Wednesday to Daniels saying that as part of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, President Bush's budget-writing staff is obliged to provide a "detailed account of all federal agency obligations and expenditures for climate change programs and activities," along with plans for programs that might mean changes in the budget.

Their effort is similar to the pressure being brought to bear on Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force by congressional investigators and Democrats who also want those records.

President Bush's decision not to regulate carbon dioxide pollution and his rejection of a 1997 climate treaty has thrust onto center stage the issue of climate change and human factors such as the burning of fossil fuels that many scientists agree contributes to global warming.

Cheney also sits on a separate climate change group that Bush assembled to review the science behind the phenomenon and to issue a set of recommendations for which there is no public timetable.

The Cabinet-level review came in March, about two weeks after Bush reversed his campaign promise to limit carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

The National Academy of Sciences reported to the White House this month, concluding the Earth's temperature is rising, mainly because of human activities, and saying dire climate changes could occur this century.

While Cheney has called for public debate about the intermingled energy and climate issues, congressional Democrats complained they are being kept in the dark. They said the Bush administration's budget-related report is "overdue and should have been submitted" with its budget proposal.

At the request of House Democrats, the General Accounting Office, which is the investigative arm of Congress, also has sent Cheney's lawyer a 10-page letter asserting a legal right to the lists of who met privately with his energy task force.

It advised Cheney that it may issue a formal demand for the information since it has legal authority to federal agency records under the law. The White House team that developed the national energy plan that was released in June met with more than 130 interest groups, many of them industry-related Bush supporters who had private sessions with Cheney.

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On the Net:

EPA: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

National Academies: <http://www.nationalacademies.org>

United Nations: <http://www.ipcc.ch>

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