

# Capitol & N.C.

## Legislation pushed on global warming

*Bill would create state commission to weigh issue*

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North Carolina is poised to be the first Southeastern state to tackle global warming and its impact on the state's coasts and economy.

With growing scientific consensus that man-made pollution is contributing to rising temperatures and climate change, state lawmakers are advancing legislation to study the effects on North Carolina and what the state can do to reduce production of greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon dioxide.

"There is certainly a developing consensus that global warming is a serious problem," said Rep. Joe Hackney, an Orange County Democrat. "It could be particularly serious for North Carolina with our extensive coastline. We need to get started on understanding the problem."

Scientists predict that the Earth could warm more quickly in the 21st century than at any time in the past 10,000 years. Human activities such as burning fossil fuels are contributing to the buildup of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

While there is still debate about how quickly climate changes will occur, estimates publicized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are that temperatures in North Carolina could increase by 1 to 5 degrees by 2100 and sea levels could rise 6 to 38 inches. Such rapid climate change could bring stronger hurricanes, drastically alter the state's coastline and change farming practices.

### Human activity

"In the last 30 years, what we've seen is a very dramatic increase in the Earth's temperatures," Rob Jackson, a scientist at Duke University, told lawmakers considering the bill. "I believe very strongly the evidence is quite clear that it's human activity."

The legislation, the first of its kind in the Southeast, would create a 32-member com-

mission to study global warming effects and direct the panel to consider whether the state should adopt voluntary pollution reduction goals for greenhouse gases. The panel would include representatives of power companies, environmental groups and the farming, forestry and manufacturing sectors as well as lawmakers.

Dana Yeganian, a spokeswoman for Progress Energy, said the utility supported the creation of a commission and is studying the effect of global climate change regulations on utilities.

"At some point in the future we have to prepare for the effect on our business of limits on carbon emissions," Yeganian said.

The study commission's recommendations would be due by November 2006 so they could be taken up during the 2007 legislative session.

### Passage could come soon

The Senate passed the bill by a large margin in May. The House, which has enlarged the size of the panel by two members, could pass it as soon as this week, then return it to the Senate for concurrence.

"If global warming is taking place, and most of the Senate members are convinced it is, we need to address it and not just sit back," said Sen. Charlie Albertson, a Duplin County Democrat who sponsored the bill. "I've been surprised at the interest in this legislation."

Stephen Smith, executive director of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, an environmental advocacy group that focuses on energy policy, said states are important laboratories for developing national policies.

"There are billions of dollars of real estate investment on the Outer Banks and concerns about beach erosion," Smith said. "None of this stuff is going to be good for that."

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