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On July 8, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee heard testimony on the Administration's plans for the 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris. The Conference will gather UN members to establish measures to limit the global warming of the earth to 2° C. As part of the conference, the Obama Administration intends to commit America to reducing carbon emissions by 26 percent by 2025.

During the hearing, Senate Republicans raised concerns about the legitimacy of international agreements made by the President without the input of Congress. However, Professor Jeremy Rabkin of the George Mason University School of Law said the Administration has precedent to commit to these reductions, as many international agreements are entered into without permission of Congress. Rabkin continued to say, however, that compared to previous agreements the proposed UNFCCC measures would have a greater scope and impact on the American public. Rabkin further agreed with Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) that Congress's only hope to stop the Administration's agenda may lie in "the power of purse," or Congress's constitutional authority to authorize and oversee federal funding. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) raised additional concerns that the 26 percent reductions commitment is unattainable by 2020, and unfair considering the emissions goals of global competitors like China. According to analyses provided by two of the witnesses, the Administration's plan would only reduce the nation's carbon pollution emissions by approximately 18 percent, leaving an additional 8 percent unaccounted for.

The Conference will run from November 30 to December 11.

Sources: E&E News, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, United Nations, White House
