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CLEAN POWER PLAN:

U.S. can meet Paris goal despite frozen rule -- White House

Amanda Reilly, E&E reporter

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The extension of renewable energy tax credits at the end of last year as part of the congressional budget deal will have "more impact over the short term" on U.S. greenhouse gas emissions than the Clean Power Plan, a White House official said today.

Speaking to reporters en route to Illinois, White House principal deputy press secretary Eric Schultz played down the impacts of last night's Supreme Court decision to freeze the Clean Power Plan, according to a readout of the remarks.



A key question is whether the United States, with the Clean Power Plan frozen, will still be able to meet the pledge it made to the international community ahead of the Paris climate talks. President Obama has promised that the United States would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 percent from 2005 levels by 2025.

The tax credit extensions, which will boost the wind and solar industries, will allow the nation to "continue the momentum of cleaner sources of energy and lower emissions in the power sector," Schultz told reporters.

"There are driving forces that will allow the United States to meet its commitment outside of the Clean Power Plan rule," Schultz said. "One of those main forces is the inclusion of the tax credits at the end of the 2015 budget agreement."

In a 5-4 decision backed by its conservative wing, the Supreme Court yesterday halted U.S. EPA's program for reducing carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector while litigation plays out. Schultz's comments echo those of administration officials who last night painted the Clean Power Plan as one of several U.S. initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Schultz said the administration's climate agenda includes policies to reduce emissions from cars and trucks, the oil and gas sector, and aircraft.

"The Clean Power Plan is only one part of this administration's initiatives to transform the energy economy in our country," Schultz said. "We're going to continue to take aggressive steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

He also predicted that litigation would be completed "well in advance" of what is needed to meet the Paris commitment.

The White House continues to have "ongoing, intense diplomatic conversations" with its partners abroad about the Paris climate deal, Schultz said. Other nations believe the Supreme Court stay will be temporary, he added.

"The administration officials who work on this and engage their counterparts in other countries feel very confident that their counterparts understand the complexities of rulemaking in the United States," he said, "and understand that this will be a temporary procedural determination."

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