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Sent: Thur 09/06/2016 1:58:50 PM (UTC)
Subject: RE:

Redacted - First Amendment

From: van Hoogstraten, David Jan
Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2016 8:48 AM
To: Brien, Michael P; Currie, Duncan; Chen, Matthew; Nolan, James
Cc: Stout, Robert
Subject:

CAMPAIGN 2016:

McKibben vows to fight for carbon tax in Democratic platform

Evan Lehmann, E&E reporter

Published: Thursday, June 9, 2016

The last two times Bill McKibben was in Washington, D.C., he was cuffed and put in jail.

This time he's fighting for climate action from inside the Democratic Party, instead of a cell.

"It's good to be here in what is the hottest year we've ever recorded on this planet," McKibben said yesterday during the first meeting of the Democratic Platform Drafting Committee.

In earlier visits, McKibben was a civil agitator who led protests against the Keystone XL pipeline. He was arrested outside the White House. Now he has brought his climate fight into a hotel conference room. As one of five members named to the committee by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), McKibben will play a leading role in trying to put Sanders' principles on climate into the party's guiding document.

McKibben said this week in an email that he'll push to include a carbon tax in the platform, a policy that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hasn't endorsed.

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McKibben's presence is one symbol of Sanders' lasting influence in the presidential race, coming one day after Clinton seized the title of presumptive nominee.

The tough negotiations around the platform's content will likely begin in earnest in the coming weeks. For now, the committee is gathering input on various issues from Democrats in a series of meetings. Yesterday's event had a theme of advancing economic equality. It continues today on issues like education, jobs and "America's role in the world."

Climate change might not be a focus until next week when the committee holds a two-day meeting in Phoenix. It will also meet in St. Louis and Orlando in the coming weeks.

The panel won't be short on opinions about climate change. Apart from McKibben, the issue will be represented by Carol Browner and Neera Tanden. Browner served as EPA administrator under President Clinton and as a key climate adviser to President Obama, who tasked her with overseeing his failed effort to pass cap-and-trade legislation in 2009 and 2010.

'It won't all be smooth sailing'

Yesterday, Browner described herself as a mother, a grandmother and, "most importantly, perhaps an environmentalist."

Tanden is a former staffer to Hillary Clinton and has championed climate action as president of the Center for American Progress, the liberal think tank founded by John Podesta, who advised Obama on climate change before running Clinton's presidential campaign.

She has spoken forcefully in support of many of Obama's climate measures, including the Paris accord, the Clean Power Plan and his efforts to reduce methane emissions. Tanden was also critical of the Supreme Court stay of Obama's cornerstone climate regulations on power plants.

"It's the dream team of the environmental community," said Heather Zichal, Obama's former climate adviser, of the three committee members. "But I suspect it won't all be smooth sailing. It never is."

McKibben, for example, might find it challenging to convince the whole committee, and broader America, of the benefits of liberal policies like keeping all fossil fuels in the ground. A carbon tax could be another point of disagreement.

The 15-member committee includes six appointees by Clinton, including Browner and Tanden, and five by Sanders. McKibben has long focused his attention on the climate by opposing the fossil fuel industry. He is deeply involved in the "Keep It in the Ground" movement and on divestment from oil and gas companies.

McKibben, who founded 350.org, gained media attention and the admiration of progressive environmentalists by leading protests against the Keystone XL pipeline that featured high-profile arrests outside the White House. The peak of civil disobedience might have come in March 2014, when 398 people were arrested for protesting the pipeline.

A year later, he was intentionally arrested again after holding a one-man protest at a gas station in Burlington, Vt. The author, educator and journalist was trying to draw attention to news reports about Exxon Mobil Corp.'s past research on climate change. Then this March, McKibben was locked up with 56 other protesters who blockaded the driveway of a gas storage company in upstate New York. They were opposing a proposed gas storage facility in the abandoned salt mines near Seneca Lake, N.Y.

Yesterday, he suggested that he'll try to steer clear of the law in his new role.

"The last two times I've come to Washington, D.C., I've ended up in jail," McKibben said, prompting loud laughter from committee members.

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