

Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange Kicks Off 2008 With First Policy Session Featuring Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)

January 23, 2008 – WASHINGTON, DC: Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) joined the Franklin Center for the first of its 2008 policy sessions on Wednesday, January 23rd. In addition to being a former Chairman of the House Judiciary and House Science Committees, Sensenbrenner currently serves as Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

At the briefing, Sensenbrenner discussed his concerns with “cap-and-trade” emissions proposals currently being discussed on Capitol Hill. Following this morning briefing, the Select Committee was holding a hearing on the distribution of emissions credits under a cap-and-trade system.

Sensenbrenner strongly opposes cap-and-trade emissions system, saying it is exactly what Congress should not be doing. He said that such systems are ineffective, and cited the example of the European Union’s cap-and-trade emissions system. Since it was made mandatory in 2005, greenhouse gas emissions in Europe have actually gone up. During that same period, the United States has managed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without relying on a cap-and-trade system. Sensenbrenner credits the development of advanced emissions technology with U.S. success on this issue.

According to Sensenbrenner, another problem with a cap-and-trade system is that developing nations like China and India will never agree to one. Thus, if the United States agrees to such a system, American competitiveness will suffer. Citing statistics showing that the Kyoto protocol could increase United States gas and electricity rates by as much as 80%, the Congressman emphasized that a an increase like this in utility costs for American families could be disastrous in the midst of a possible economic recession. It doesn’t make sense, he said, to provide tax rebates in an economic stimulus package if they would be used to pay higher utility bills.

Sensenbrenner was asked about rumors that the President was going to announce his support for a cap-and-trade system during the State of the Union. He said he was familiar with the rumors, but that he had not seen any posturing from the Administration that indicated they were changing their position. He noted that the President’s Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality recently testified on the Hill against cap-and-trade systems.

When asked about possible alternatives to a cap-and-trade system, Sensenbrenner argued that emissions technology is the best alternative since it can reduce greenhouse gases without hurting the economy. Sensenbrenner said he believes that cap-and-trade is being driven more by economic interests, rather than by environmental interests. He also noted that Japan, Italy, and Spain – all signatories to the Kyoto protocol – were facing fines as high as \$33 billion for being out of compliance.

A question was asked about current attitudes in Washington toward India and China. Sensenbrenner expressed some concern about the overall view toward free trade. He noted that none of the presidential candidates are running on a free trade platform and that in the past, presidential candidates expressing strong protectionist views were usually among the first to fall during the primaries. He said that isn’t happening this year.

Sensenbrenner was also asked about his views on global climate change. He responded that he thought many of the projections about rising sea levels were inaccurate, and that while Al Gore has received a lot of attention on this issue, the *New York Times* ran a list of major inaccuracies in Gore's documentary.

Finally, Sensenbrenner was asked about the outlook for judicial pay raises. He commented that he believes it is unlikely to happen, since such a raise would be subject to the Democrats' pay-go rules, and they'd have to offset the funding.