



By the time you read this...the sun may have set on yet another federal energy bill. The comprehensive proposal both broadens and weakens federal **electric utility regulation** and affects all aspects of energy policy. Contentious provisions have left it stalled—like similar bills in past Congresses—in a House–Senate **conference committee** since late 2003. The clock is running out fast as lawmakers toil past a scheduled **October 1** adjournment, but probably not for long, as re-election beckons. **Green coal?** New materials able to withstand ultra-high temperatures promise cleaner coal combustion along with power-plant efficiency gains, according to the **Electric Power Research Institute**. Drastic reductions of CO₂ and pollutant emissions are expected along with significant fuel savings and other cost reductions, EPRI says. **Keep on chillin'** may be best advice for **California**, which hasn't done enough to avoid repeating its 2000–01 **power shortages**. The Bay Area Economic Forum says a hot summer—unlike the recent one—could spell trouble because legislative and regulatory fixes haven't been implemented as demand continues to grow.