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# Viewpoint: EPA's 'Clean Power Plan' is a mistake

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The good thing about listening to political speeches is you find out the real reason why things happen.

Yeah, right.

That's the case with the so called "Clean Power Plan" and the president's official roll-out of it Monday. And while the president has a right to his own opinion, even about energy, his **Environmental Protection Agency's** "Clean Power Plan" is a mistake. Let me explain.

## **Fallacy No. 1: If we lead the way, the world will follow.**

The president said, "The only reason that China is getting serious about their emissions is because of us." Throughout his speech, and throughout the comment period of this new EPA rule, the Obama administration assumes that if America will only get serious about climate change, the world will follow.

But can the world afford to follow us?

Truth be told, Germany has led the way in energy transformation. They declared war on coal and nuclear, and set an unbelievable goal to be at 50 percent renewable by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050.

German families now pay three times what most Americans pay for power. Companies like BMW are moving certain manufacturing processes "offshore" to America because of the cheap energy prices, particularly to states like South Carolina and Georgia. They're learning about the true costs of government-mandated clean power.

The president's ideas sound much like the German experiment. My guess is that India, China and other countries will smile and nod at the president, but then spend billions buying the very coal we used to burn. Sadly, their plants will not be near as clean-burning as ours, and the net result in the world after the president's plan could be an increase in carbon—instead of a reduction.

Wait, what?

**Fallacy No. 2: If we don't act now, it will be too late.**

In fact, the president said the earth was "fragile" and that inaction on our part would disrupt the lives of millions. But we have made great progress in some of the things he wants to do.

Think about it. Georgia, a strong red-state run by Republicans, is the fastest growing solar state in the nation, had more clean energy jobs than any state in the first quarter of 2015, and is second only to California in electric cars. We have reduced our CO2 since 2005 by over 30 percent, and real pollutants like mercury, sulphur and nitrous oxide have been reduced by over 85 percent since 1990.

My point—we're on the right track without a punitive, overreaching federal rule that usurps state authority and mandates accelerated investment.

In 2005, 52 percent of **Georgia Power's** generation was coal. By 2015, it was 32 percent. In 2005, 27 percent of Georgia Power's generation was powered by natural gas, and in 2015 it was over 49%. Plus, we're building two new carbon-free nuclear reactors.

In fact, one of these reactors will supply more power than all of Georgia's solar—combined. We have built a model here in our state that provides flexibility so that we can use the most cost effective fuel source at any time.

Under Obama EPA's rule, that will be over. Why? Because the president says the sky is falling, and without America's immediate action the planet as we know it will cease to exist. The weight of the world is on our shoulders, he said. We must act, and "it will hurt," he said.

He's right about one thing – it will hurt. Right in our wallets.

**Fallacy No. 3: Taking a stand against climate change is a moral obligation.**

That is a direct quote from the president of the United States. When we talk about "moral obligations," we open a can of worms—a list so large it would overwhelm even Mother Teresa.

If the president wants to discuss "moral obligations", what about the obligation of the U.S. government to honor its commitment to address the long term storage of the nation's spent fuel inventory.

According to the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), the typical reactor creates about 20 metric tons of used nuclear fuel per year. Over the past four decades, the entire industry has produced 74,258 metric tons of used nuclear fuel. That amount already exceeds the capacity of Yucca Mountain, the designated repository for permanent waste. Yet Georgia is not allowed to even reprocess this nuclear material and extract the remaining energy from it because of—yes--binding federal rules and regulations.

The inaction of the federal government to dispose or recycle this waste they promised to pick up actually serves as a disincentive to states that might follow Georgia's lead in building this carbon-free, ultra-reliable source of power generation.



The federal government technically owns the waste, and made a promise to pick it up and safely dispose of it. In fact, they attached a fee to every kilowatt hour of power generated at our carbon-free nuclear plants, yet not one ounce of waste has been picked up. That "moral obligation" trumps any new regulation in my book.

Wouldn't it make more sense to deal responsibly with the spent fuel from our nation's nuclear fleet before imposing such cumbersome rules on virtually every state over carbon dioxide—something every plant and tree must have to survive?

Like so many political issues, criticizing carbon has become politically correct, and the president's rhetoric has whipped people into a frenzy.

At the Georgia Public Service Commission, we have gone to great lengths to create a diverse portfolio to protect our ratepayers. This rule unravels all the planning we have done for the last 20 years.

Under this rule, a good economy becomes our enemy, and a polar vortex could trigger a substantial fuel cost increase.

Under this rule, the EPA would force us to abandon another 3900 MW of fossil generation without regard to the \$5 billion invested to install environmental controls.

I can only hope that a court might grant a stay of this rule until the costs to ratepayers can be properly analyzed and compared to the alleged benefits.