

AJC.com

[NEWS](#)
[SPORTS](#)
[LIFE](#)
[NEIGHBORHOODS](#)
[THINGS TO DO](#)
[BLOGS](#)
[MORE](#)

74°

SUBSCRIBE

A "rooftop revolution?"



COMMENTS 1

NEWS



Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck work, play in Atlanta



Owner severely beaten inside SW Atlanta auto body shop



2 people killed in separate hit-and-run crashes in south Fulton



AdChoices

Filters up to 98% of allergens out of your car.*

Find your filter

*Road dust and pollen particles ranging in size from 5-100 microns.

FRAM FRESHBreeze

Close Ad X

rbadie

A "rooftop revolution?"



COMMENT

August 12, 2015 | Filed in: **Economy**

Moderated by Rick Badie

The new Clean Power Plan, regardless of your thoughts on it, could affect the current and future energy economy in our state. What could be the potential impact in Georgia? Today's guest columnists present dueling views. The lead writer considers the landmark measure a "viable option" for the environment and the economy. The companion piece derides extensive regulations and argues that Georgia, already on a path of progress, didn't need a federal mandate.

Embrace effective option for clean power

By Steve Valk

Long before the Clean Power Plan was released last week, opponents of the president's initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at power plants attacked it with prophecies of doom and gloom that made the Book of Revelation sound like a Dr. Seuss story.

Here's the most important thing you need to know about the new climate regulations: "Just say no" is not a viable option.

We know 97 percent of climate scientists are convinced that human-caused global warming is happening. Think of these scientists as the earth's oncologists. When 97 out of 100 say we have cancer, the only discussion to have is one regarding treatment, which means finding ways to drastically reduce carbon pollution.

Sunday's AJC offered an eye-opening report on the impact climate change is projected to have on coastal Georgia in the coming decades. Billions of dollars in property could be lost to encroaching seas, not to mention decimation of ecosystems that provide livelihoods for many.

Critics present the debate on the Clean Power Plan as a choice between the environment and the economy. That choice was a no-brainer for Atlanta-based corporate giants Coca-Cola and United Parcel Service. Along with 365 other companies, they signed on to a letter urging states to implement the new carbon pollution standards:

"Our support is firmly grounded in economic reality," the letter said. "Clean energy solutions are cost effective and innovative ways to drive investment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions... Clear and consistent policies can

Digital Business

MARKETING • STRATEGY • INNOVATION

Enroll Today!

UGA® EXECUTIVE EDUCATION ATLANTA

The University of Georgia TERRY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Search ...

Search

Recent Posts

- The plight of LGBT teens
- A "rooftop revolution?"
- Homeless, hungry too

Follow

send market signals that help businesses and investors plan for the future. We are seeking long-term policies that provide the certainty needed to transition to a clean energy economy.”

Under the CPP, Georgia must reduce carbon emissions 25 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, an easily achievable goal because of two big factors:

- Georgia has emissions-free nuclear power coming online that will power half a million homes.
- The passage of House Bill 57 by the General Assembly makes it easier for homeowners to finance solar power systems.

The incentive to reduce carbon pollution and easier access to financing solar energy will position Georgia to join the “rooftop revolution” and add jobs to our economy.

The CPP provides states with great flexibility to achieve the desired emissions reductions. State plans, which must be finalized by 2018, “could accommodate imposition by a state of a fee for CO2 emissions,” according to the EPA. For those worried about rising electric rates, revenue from that fee could be returned directly to Georgia households, thereby offsetting any rate increases.

How will the CPP affect our economy? It depends on the pathway Georgia chooses to comply with the mandate. A study released late last month by Georgia Tech found that the least-cost compliance pathway involves combining renewable energy with efficiency policies, plus adding a small price on carbon. Benefits of this pathway include “lower electricity bills across all customer classes, greater GDP growth, and significant reductions” in air pollution.

We must act now, because a business-as-usual scenario would increase average global temperatures 4 degrees Celsius (7 Fahrenheit) by 2100. Such an increase would result in cataclysmic changes that include extreme heat waves, reduced food supplies and a sea-level rise displacing hundreds of millions of people, according to the World Bank. Nations of the world are expected to reach a climate agreement in Paris at year’s end. A strong commitment from the U.S. is needed to assure success and cooperation from other countries.

Critics of the Clean Power Plan are entitled to their say, but only if they have a better solution, such as a national revenue-neutral carbon fee. “Just say no” is clearly not an option.

Steve Valk is communications director for Citizens' Climate Lobby.

EPA grants higher energy costs, burdens

By Tim Echols

Someone once told me people could get used to anything, and in America, I think we have grown numb in our reaction to orders from a strong, centralized government in Washington. It doesn't faze us. It simply is the way life is now.

President Barack Obama's recent release of the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan final rule has drawn praise from many corners, and those like me who would take issue with the rule and its presuppositions are said to be somehow as standing in the way of progress, even reckless..

I consider myself anything but environmentally reckless. My family owns three electric cars, put solar thermal on our house to heat our water and turn our air conditioning units off every summer day from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. in order to relieve pressure on the grid. We use E85 in our non-electric car, and I created the Alternative Fueled Vehicle Roadshow that travels the East Coast. My point is: I think the solution to our energy issues can be resolved here at home without federal intervention and without guilt from the White House.

But it is not just guilt — there's also a hammer. That hammer is the EPA — the infamous U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that churns out rules like the Varsity makes hotdogs. These rules are frequently challenged,

- [Seaport News](#)
- [Working together to build communities](#)

Recent Comments

[Unions Oppose Plan T... o](#)
[Union blasts MARTA](#)

Archives

- [August 2015](#)
- [July 2015](#)
- [June 2015](#)
- [May 2015](#)
- [April 2015](#)
- [March 2015](#)
- [February 2015](#)
- [January 2015](#)
- [December 2014](#)
- [November 2014](#)
- [October 2014](#)
- [September 2014](#)
- [August 2014](#)
- [July 2014](#)
- [June 2014](#)
- [May 2014](#)

Categories

- [Economy](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Leadership](#)
- [Quality of Life](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)

Meta

- [Register](#)
- [Log in](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [Powered by WordPress.com](#)

but usually implemented by utilities, and paid for by ratepayers. Later, a court may overturn them after the money has been spent.

In the Clean Power Plan, the rule forces us to accelerate progress we would have made anyway. Think of it as upgrading your smartphone before the end of your contract period, resulting in a much higher fee. When it comes to Obama's EPA plan, prepare to multiply that times several billion dollars because it is your state's electric grid that the president is mandating be upgraded early.

Consider the progress Georgia has made in energy and environment protection:

- In 2009, the Georgia Public Service Commission approved the plan to construct two new nuclear power units currently under construction at Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle near Waynesboro. These units will produce no carbon emissions or other greenhouse gases for at least 60 years.
- Since 2011, working with the PSC, Georgia Power has increased its purchases of solar generation from almost nothing to approximately 1 gigawatt of electricity. If all of this solar was producing today, Georgia Power would have the fourth-largest solar portfolio in the nation.
- In 2013 the PSC approved the closing of 16 of Georgia Power Company's coal and oil fired electric generating units, a decision that has already reduced carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases.
- In 2014 the PSC approved Georgia Power's purchase of 250 megawatts of wind power, another clean energy source, which produces no carbon or other greenhouse gases
- Georgia Power is in the process of adding 282 megawatts of homegrown, Georgia biomass capacity to our grid.
- Georgia Power, with the support of the PSC, has increased its demand-side power initiative and energy efficiency programs. Both of these programs have reduced power consumption, which in turn reduces greenhouse gases.

My point: If you are going fast in the right direction, as we are, do you need a federal mandate that drastically changes energy planning for the state as this rule does? Given that we are coming out of the Great Recession, does it make sense to burden our citizens with higher energy cost?

As we make new investments in solar, wind and other clean energy improvements, you, the ratepayers fund all of it, with interest. As one of our elected energy commissioners on the PSC, I take my job seriously: to keep energy rates low and reliability high for you and business interests.

We'll comply with this EPA mandate, but don't expect me to go quietly.

Tim Echols serves on the Georgia Public Service Commission.

Related

[Will carbon rules hurt economy?](#)
In "Economy"

[Bright future in natural gas, woodlands](#)
In "Economy"

[The rise of Georgia solar](#)
In "Economy"

[VIEW COMMENTS](#)

[< PREVIOUS](#)

[Homeless, hungry too](#)

[The plight of LGBT teens](#)

[NEXT >](#)

FREE Infrared Automation Guidebook
The Ultimate IR Resource Guide for
Automated Processes

[Get the Guide](#)

