Why exiting the Paris Accord makes sense

As an elected regulator, I live every day in a world of energy and the environment. But there’s another important e-used in a red state like Georgia that has to be part of the equation—“economics.” My colleagues at the Public Service Commission and I seek to harmonize our energy supply with existing and anticipated environmental regulations, with a keen eye on the harsh reality of economics and how all of these affect doing business in our state. The likely negative economic impact to the U.S. is at the core of why so many voters on both sides of the aisle object to the Paris Accord.

For those who don’t follow global politics, the Paris Accord, known also as COP 21, was officially the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris, France, in late 2015. UN conferences operate on a consensus-based decision-making model—as opposed to a majority-rule system. While this might sound ideal, I have seen first-hand how smaller, less-developed countries are bullied into submitting on UN-sponsored events. The conference brokered the Paris Accord, from which President Trump just announced the U.S.’s eventual withdrawal, occurred during the Obama Administration and was heavily attended by U.S. delegates who supported the president and his climate policies, including the Clean Power Plan. Republicans like me, who could have attended, sat out the event because we knew our voice would be muted.

At the time, I joked that if I were in Paris for the event, I would have needed a security detail for fear that my conservative ideas would spark a riot. That would not be the case today as Nikki Haley, the president’s ambassador to the United Nations, would be front and center and appoint much of the U.S. delegation. The Paris Accord is just one of many UN conferences on various topics that seek to control policies in participating countries. In this case, the Paris agenda can best be described as the decarbonization of the economy, a familiar theme globally in recent years. The Kyoto Protocol was an early version of the Paris agreement, adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on Dec. 11, 1997, and entered into in 2005.

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Eventually, the U.S. and in Georgia, we are experimenting with batteries, too. Large scale battery farms and extensive energy efficiency upgrades are on the rise on the West Coast and will continue in Georgia in the coming 10 years. Finally, let’s not forget the impact of low power rates. Georgia’s electricity cost is 14 percent below the national average, with average power bills about one-third the price of a German power bill. Even better, Georgia and South Carolina eliminated the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing to attract even more industry. In Georgia, the PSC froze base rates at Georgia Power for three years as a part of the merger deal between Southern Company and Atlantic Gas Light Resources. All of that is good news for power customers. The Paris Accord is a United Nations solution to a perceived global problem. But like our country’s dues to the United Nations, America is asked to contribute more than its share and that is simply not in our best interests.”

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