

## Political Opponents In Va. Push Cap-And-Trade Bill To Stem Global Warming

Chris White

January 22, 2016

Two Virginia legislators from different sides of the political spectrum have put aside their ideological differences and joined forces to craft a cap-and-trade bill in the state, which they say will lower carbon emissions while raising cash to contend with rising sea levels.

Democratic Sen. A. Donald McEachin, and Ron Villanueva, a Republican Virginia House Delegate, told reporters Wednesday their bipartisan bill would force the state to join a regional cap-and-trade program. Lawmakers say the bill would generate \$250 million in revenue and ratchet down carbon emissions.

A portion of the money raised by the bill would go to helping the state's coastal cities stifle rising sea levels, while a little more than a quarter of the money would go to green energy programs. Both legislators said they don't believe fighting man-made global warming should be a political issue.

"Trying to do the right thing by the environment is not a Democratic issue; it's not a Republican issue. It's something we should all be concerned about," McEachin said during a news conference attended by Villanueva and environmental activists.

Virginia would become 10th state to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative(or RGGI), a regional cap-and-trade program — the other 9 states committing to the plan are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The state's largest energy company — Dominion Virginia Power — is dead-set against a cap-and-trade system, suggesting it would increase electricity rates among Virginia's poorest communities.

"We are reviewing the bill, but at first blush it looks like it would raise rates considerably in Virginia ... at a time when Dominion's residential rates are currently 32 percent below the average of states under the RGGI structure," Dominion Virginia Power spokesman David Botkins told reporters.

He added: “RGGI states have a very different energy situation, including higher costs, different usage patterns, lower growth rates, and different generation mixes.”

President Barack Obama passed the Clean Power Plan last year mandating a 32 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions from U.S. power companies. Many CPP proponents suggest a cap-and-trade system is perhaps the best way to comply with Obama’s climate rule.

Some climatologists are skeptical, however.

Chip Knappenberger, a long-time climatologist and current assistant director of the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute, told The Daily Caller News Foundation Thursday that cap-and-trade systems have negligible impacts on both carbon emission output and on the climate in general.

“Even a complete cessation of Virginia’s greenhouse gas emissions will have an undetectable impact on the future course of global, regional, or local climate change,” Knappenberger said about McEachin and Villanueva’s bill, adding, “anything less than a complete curtailment will have even less of an impact.”

He added: “RGGI is a bad deal for Virginia ... for one thing, electricity rates will certainly rise.”