



Climate Regulations Don't Limit Warming

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Under questioning by Rep. David McKinley (R-WV) during March 22 hearings before the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Gina McCarthy admitted the Obama administration's climate efforts will do nothing to prevent climate change, acknowledging they are symbolic attempts to get other countries to make steep carbon dioxide emissions cuts.

McCarthy was unmoved when McKinley noted the negative impact regulations such as the Clean Power Plan have had on jobs and electricity prices.

Concerning the Clean Power Plan, McKinley asked, "If it doesn't have an impact on climate change around the world, why are we subjecting our hard working taxpayers and men and women in the coal fields to something that has no benefit?"

Administration 'Showing Leadership'

"We see it as having had enormous benefit in showing sort of domestic leadership, as well as garnering support around the country for the agreement we reached in Paris," McCarthy responded.

Marlo Lewis, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, says McCarthy has made similar statements on other occasions.

"Actually, McCarthy said nothing new here," said Lewis. "Back in September 2013, she admitted to Rep. Mike Pompeo she could not 'link' the Clean Power Plan to 'impacts' on any of EPA's 26 'climate indicators.' Rather, McCarthy said, the CPP is 'part of an overall strategy that is positioning the U.S. for leadership in an international discussion.'"

In July 2015, McCarthy testified the value of the Clean Power Plan "is not measured [by the amount of warming it prevents.] ... I'm not disagreeing that this action in and of itself will not make all the difference we need to address climate action, but what I'm saying is that if we don't take action domestically we will never get started."

No Effect on Climate

Patrick Michael, director of the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute, says U.S. leadership on climate change has produced few results. Michael says even if the 184 nations agreeing to cut or cap their emissions in Paris actually keep their commitments, the impact on global temperature will be minimal.

“While McCarthy is correct the Clean Power Plan and other Obama administration climate directives will have no detectable effect on global temperature for any foreseeable future, the notion that the Paris agreement is substantive is equally fatuous,” Michaels said. “The reduction in global warming from the Paris agreement of around one or two-tenths of a degree Celsius, like the effects of our policies, will be too small to measure.”

David Legates, a professor of geology at the University of Delaware, says if the Obama administration refocused its efforts, it could have a positive impact on human well-being and the environment.

“If McCarthy really wants to show ‘domestic leadership,’ she would be better served focusing on enhancing economic development, because poverty is the greatest threat to both human well-being and the environment,” Legates said. “If we make energy so expensive only the rich can afford it, then the poor, the vulnerable, and the oppressed will be condemned to a life of poverty, sickness, and a low life expectancy.”