

Nevada leads nation in reducing carbon output

By Thomas Mitchell
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Those onerous and costly Environmental Protection Agency rules requiring power plants in each state to cut carbon output by 30 percent from its 2005 level by 2030 should not be so onerous and costly for Nevadans after all. We've already done so.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (USEIA), between 2005 and 2011 Nevada electric power plants cut carbon output by 33 percent. That was the most by any state.

Declare victory, hold a parade and tell our lawmakers they can repeal Senate Bill 123, the 2013 legislation that requires NV Energy to shut down all its coal-fired plants that produce electricity cheaply and replace them with natural gas-fired plants and renewable energy generation that costs three or four times more per kilowatt-hour than coal-fired generation.

Somehow I don't think that's going to happen. The 645-page set of EPA rules put out earlier this month are so confusing that hardly anyone can interpret them.

In fact, all the major Nevada news media reported practically verbatim: "Nevada's power plants pumped out more than 14 million metric tons of carbon dioxide pollution in 2012, about the same as 3 million cars produce annually. Figuring the amount of power produced, the 2012 emission rate was 988 pounds per megawatt hour. That would be cut to 647 by 2030 if Nevada meets its EPA goal."

Of course, the carbon output in 2012 is irrelevant, since the rules set the base year for 30 percent reduction as 2005.

The obfuscation begins.

According to USEIA, Nevada is already producing 68 percent of its electricity from natural gas, and it is second in the nation in utility-scale geothermal generation and third in utility-scale solar power.

Whatever the EPA regs dictate, Nevada's lawmakers in their infinite wisdom and utter disregard for Nevadan's wallets have established a renewable energy portfolio standard that requires 25 percent of all electricity generated in the state by 2025 must come from renewable sources, such as wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and hydroelectric. (One study estimates this renewable portfolio will cost residential power users up to \$130 a year and industrial power users up to \$47,000 a year and cost up to 3,000 jobs.) In 2013, the state was already producing 18 percent of its power from these sources.

All of this is for the stated purpose of preventing global warming, even though there has been no global warming for 17 years despite a rapid increase in carbon output, which defies of all the computer models.

Also, we apparently are to pay no heed to the fact U.S. fossil-fueled power plants account for only 6 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. So, cutting 30 percent of U.S. output from power plants would reduce global output by only 2 percent by 2030. Total global carbon output in 2012 alone increased 2.1 percent. The U.S. decreased its emissions 3.7 percent that year, while China increased by 5.9 percent and India by 7.7 percent.

Those EPA rules amount to a senseless and futile and masochistic gesture.

The aforementioned 645-page EPA document makes the audacious claim that cutting carbon emissions by 30 percent will result in climate benefits of \$30 billion, health benefits of up to \$59 billion, but compliance costs of only \$7.3 billion in the year 2030. How one calculates climate benefits is a practice akin to alchemy.

This rule basically is a decree to shut down all coal-fired power plants since they produce the most carbon.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, on the other hand, estimates the rule will cut the average annual economic output by \$51 billion and cost 224,000 jobs every year through 2030.

The bottom line is that Americans will be paying real money for theoretical benefits.

Patrick Michaels at Cato Institute — editor of the book “Climate Coup: Global warming's invasion of our government and our lives” — spells out the vaunted benefits of this move: “The EPA's own model, ironically acronymed MAGICC, estimates that its new policies will prevent a grand total of 0.018°C in warming by 2100. Obviously, that's not enough to satisfy the steadily shrinking percentage of Americans who think global warming is a serious problem.

“MAGICC tells us that the futility of whatever Obama proposes for existing plants will be statistically indistinguishable from making sure that there are no new coal-fired ones. In fact, dropping the carbon dioxide emissions from all sources of electrical generation to zero would reduce warming by a grand total of 0.04°C by 2100.”

Senseless, futile and masochistic.