

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## The EPA's Political Futility

Its climate-change policies set up the administration for a fall on Election Day.

**By Patrick J. Michaels**  
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On June 2, the Environmental Protection Agency is going to announce new rules for existing coal-fired power plants, most likely a 20 percent reduction in allowable carbon dioxide emissions. The only way this will be possible will be by upgrading almost all combustion units, and the ultimate cost of the upgrades will make coal noncompetitive with much-less-expensive natural gas-fired facilities.

EPA's proposed new greenhouse-gas regulations are a campaign promise come true. In 2008, Senator Barack Obama announced that, if elected, his climate policies would "necessarily bankrupt" anyone who wanted to build a new coal-fired power plant.

Public comments on EPA's proposal to do just that closed on May 9, and there is no chance that the president will renege — or that this policy will have any detectable effect on global temperature.

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.

This is hardly going to stop the crescendo of global-warming horror stories, perhaps best summarized by the government's recently released "National Assessment" of the effects of climate change on our country.

For example, the assessment tells us that global warming will increase mental illness in our nation's cities. The obvious implication is that people in Richmond are crazier than they are in Washington, 100 miles to the north. Or that people must really be loony in Miami.

But what about all the weird weather plaguing the country? What the alarmists don't tell you is that not since records were kept in the 1860s have we have gone this long without a Category 3

hurricane's crossing our shoreline. They omit that there's no evidence of an increase in weather-related damages once you adjust for the fact that there are now more people with more expensive stuff to hit. Even the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, so often cited to justify our futile policies, acknowledges that one.

The politics of scaring people to death over climate change are probably more dangerous than the weather. And research suggests that the more people read that some "scientists say" the world is about to end, the less they believe them.

Chalk it up to apocalypse fatigue. By my best guess, global warming is the eighth environmental Armageddon I have lived through. Who even remembers that, according to some of our most esteemed scientists, "acid rain" was going to cause an "ecological silent spring"? Like so many global catastrophes, it was a bit exaggerated.

You'd think the administration would see not just how futile these policies are in addressing climate change but also how costly they are politically. Some compelling analysis of polls shows that the Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 election because, under Democratic leadership, it passed cap-and-trade, which the Senate wisely stopped short of. In Australia, similar policies favoring cap-and-trade cost the Liberal party its leader in 2009 and subsequently sacked two Labour prime ministers, Keven Rudd and Julia Gillard.

Is this really the road the administration wants to go down in 2014? If history is any guide, a pretty steep price will be paid on Election Day — all for policies that will have no measurable effect on climate change.

*— Patrick J. Michaels is director of the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute and a senior fellow in research and economic development at George Mason University.*