



EPA’s ‘strangulation by regulation’ approach leaves Kentuckians out in the cold

By Jim Waters

[Coal](#) produces 94 percent of the Bluegrass State’s electricity, and it’s providing good jobs to more than 18,000 miners.

That’s a lot of mortgage and tuition payments, not to speak of a ton of votes for coal backers.

Still, President Obama and his merry band of regulators, including Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa Jackson, while changing tactics, continue to push toward an unrealistic environmental agenda centered on a “fossil-fuels-is-so-yesterday” mindset.

After failing last year to impose a ruinous cap-and-trade scheme on fossil-fuel producers, this administration’s business-hostile EPA switched to an “aggressive and overzealous strangulation by regulation,” as described by U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers, R-Ky., from Somerset.

Unfortunately, the EPA salivates at the opportunity to stick it to coal producers like Rogers used to smack his lips at the thought of yet another government earmark. On this one, Rogers gets it right.

The incompetence of it all becomes apparent when you consider that Obama thinks his plan ultimately will end up doing wonders for thousands of Kentuckians who depend on coal for their livelihood. That’s why he foolishly revealed on the campaign trail his plan to embark on an energy policy that would make it so costly to build a coal-fired plant that it would “bankrupt” the builders.

“Lisa Jackson has said that it’s her goal to move away from coal to ‘green’ jobs,” said Bill Bissett, president of the [Kentucky Coal Association](#). “That’s so shortsighted and unrealistic. It’s really hard to fathom.”

Somehow, Jackson thinks that trying to force the miners out of the mines they’ve worked in and out of a way of life they’ve known for generations somehow will do them a great favor, Bissett said.

“There’s cultural disconnect with this administration that it thinks that removing coal production will somehow help Appalachia, when really, it will create more ghost towns and destroy more communities,” he said.

Also hard to fathom is this: If the Obama-Jackson tag team is allowed to carry out its radical energy plan, which would plunder the commonwealth’s coal industry, it’s likely to make our current economy look like the Roaring 20s or booming 1990s.

The Associated Press reported on the day following Obama’s “State of the Union” address that the administration’s proposal for protecting streams from coal mining would “eliminate thousands of jobs and curtail mining across much of the country.” The AP obtained a document that showed how rules aimed

largely at Appalachian surface mining would “slash more than 9,000 jobs and production from surface and underground mines in 22 states.”

That’s too much for even Gov. Steve Beshear, Obama’s Democratic colleague, to accept.

In Beshear’s “[State of the Commonwealth](#)” speech this year, Beshear said Kentucky jobs and low energy rates are endangered “because Washington bureaucrats continue to impose arbitrary and unreasonable regulations on the mining of coal. To them I say: ‘Get off our backs!’”

Every Kentuckian should tell their congressional representatives the same thing.

Coal industry officials are doing their part.

The KCA has taken Jackson and the EPA to court in an attempt to force federal regulators to act on the 106 current permits and projects intentionally left in limbo by the EPA, the U.S. Corps of Engineers and the Office of Surface Mining, and to create more certainty for future applications so that the coal industry — and our economy — can get moving again.

And every Kentuckian better hope the industry succeeds.

If not, Bissett said that everything “from household budgets to employers to nonprofit agencies” will be left out in the economic cold.

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