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Boilermakers say new EPA regs will kill coal industry

Thousands of jobs will be lost without solving climate change

Kansas City, KS — Newton B. Jones, President of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, AFL-CIO and CLC, today issued a statement condemning the EPA's September 20 announcement for new source carbon dioxide emissions, noting that the severe CO2 restrictions for new coal-fired power plants will destroy an entire American industry while achieving little to curb climate change. His statement follows.

"The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers has long been a proponent of sensible legislation and regulatory action to put the United States on a path to declining carbon dioxide emissions. We have lobbied hard for these changes. Our members have been at the forefront of installing emission controls across the United States and in Canada. And we have supported President Obama's assertion that only an "all of the above" energy strategy will work for America, embracing the continued use of coal, wind, solar, natural gas, and other power sources.

Yet, the EPA's announcement today is certain to remove coal from the "all of the above" strategy. While the proposed rule correctly separates emission limits for natural gas and coal, it dramatically lowers the CO2 emission limit for coal from 1,768 pounds per megawatt-hour to 1,100 pounds per megawatt-hour. That level is impossible to meet with commercially available technology.

The EPA's insistence that carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology is available is inaccurate. The exorbitant cost of CCS makes it economically infeasible to implement, and it has not been tested sufficiently on a commercial basis.

Effectively, the EPA's new source regulations will end future coal-fired plant construction, despite enormous progress that has been made in recent years with ultra super-critical, integrated gasification combined cycle, and other advance emission-limiting technologies.

Killing coal use in the United States will do virtually nothing to curb global warming. Consider these points:

- Elizabeth Muller, Executive Director of the climate research group, Berkeley Earth (New York Times, April 12): “China’s greenhouse gas emissions are twice those of the United States and growing at 8 percent to 10 percent per year. By 2020 . . . China will emit greenhouse gases at four times the rate of the United States, and even if American emissions were to suddenly disappear tomorrow, world emissions would be back at the same level within four years as a result of China’s growth alone.”
- Maria van der Hoeven, Executive Director, International Energy Agency: “Despite . . . a boom in renewable energy over the last decade, the average unit of energy produced today is basically as dirty as it was 20 years ago.”
- World Resources Institute: “At the end of 2012, approximately 1,200 coal plants were being planned across 59 countries — about three-quarters of them in China and India.”

Clearly, the unilateral destruction of the American coal industry will not solve global climate change. If anything, it will shut down existing investment in new research that holds the key to dramatic reductions in CO2 emissions from coal-fired plants. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is free to continue to expand the use of this reliable and economic energy source.

Today, on behalf of the Boilermakers union, I call upon the EPA and President Obama to take all necessary action to change this industry-killing proposed rule. And I call on Congress to come together for new energy legislation that sets America on a reasonable and responsible path to measured and effective climate change rules.”

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The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, AFL-CIO and CLC, is headquartered in Kansas City, KS. Our 60,000 members in the United States and Canada are engaged in heavy industrial construction and maintenance, commercial and naval shipbuilding, cement making, railroads, manufacturing, mining and other industries.

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