

EPA RULE AND BIG STONE PLANT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the President's misguided plan to reduce carbon emissions from existing powerplants, specifically the impact it is going to have on my home State, South Dakota.

Over the last year, EPA has claimed its rule will grant States flexibility to meet burdensome emission reduction targets. However, there is really only one way for South Dakota to meet its staggering target of a 35-percent reduction; that is, by effectively shutting down Big Stone Plant, our only base-load coal-fired plant, which will soon be among the cleanest in the country.

The plant, which provides affordable power to thousands in South Dakota and neighboring States, is nearing completion of a \$384 million environmental upgrade project to meet the EPA's regional haze and Utility MACT regulations. So as you can see, highlighted on this poster by a Watertown public opinion op-ed headline, the clean powerplant would threaten this significant investment.

The EPA has required this nearly \$400 million upgrade—which is more than the original cost, the entire original cost of the plant itself—and is now turning around and saying: That is not enough. We want it shut down.

Let me repeat that. The EPA has required a \$384 million environmental upgrade to make the plant among the cleanest in the country and now wants to put all that to waste. This isn't right, and this will stick South Dakotans with holding the bill.

When the Obama EPA pushes new regulations to attack affordable and reliable coal generation, it is low-income families who take the biggest hit. South Dakotans have already seen their electricity rates increased to pay for that \$384 million add-on, but the Clean Power Plan will limit the ability for this investment to be recouped, and now they will be charged even more.

This is because the Clean Power Plan would require Big Stone Plant to run less, even on a limited or seasonal basis, not at the high capacity for which it was designed and is most efficient. At the same time, the Clean Power Plan would require the plan to run more efficiently to meet strict emission requirements. So, again, we have had this nearly \$400 million investment to make the plant cleaner and more efficient in order to satisfy the EPA, and now the Obama EPA wants to shut it down.

The Obama EPA should not push regulations that result in higher utility costs for consumers, less grid reliability, and fewer jobs. Affordable and reliable energy helps grow the economy and helps low- and middle-income families make ends meet.

Unfortunately, the EPA's rule will only increase electrical rates and hurt those who can afford it the least by forcing our most affordable energy sources offline.

I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this burdensome rule and to

prevent the serious economic burden it will impose on middle-income families in this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, this morning President Obama will be speaking at a meeting of the Catholic Health Association of the United States.

Now, the White House says the President will talk about his health care law. The President has already been spending a lot of time talking about the law. At the G7 summit in Germany this past weekend, the President was asked about the law and what he said is: "The thing is working."

He said: "We haven't had a conversation about the horrors of ObamaCare because none of them have come to pass."

The President must be kidding himself.

This morning, when he talks to this Catholic health care group, President Obama should stop his denial and he should confess the truth. If he gives another rosy speech about the impact of this terrible law, he will be, once again, intentionally and deliberately misleading the people in his audience.

The President should not stand on the stage today and pretend his law is helping more people than it hurts. He should not stand on that stage today and pretend he hasn't heard that his law is causing premiums to skyrocket. He should not stand on that stage today and pretend he has kept his promises about this law. He should not stand on that stage today without admitting his law has cut into the take-home pay of millions of hard-working Americans.

What the President should do is talk about how his health care law has hurt nonprofit hospitals like the Catholic hospitals across the country. That was the subject of a Wall Street Journal article just last Wednesday with the headline: "Hospitals Expected More of a Boost From Health Law."

Now, remember, President Obama said his health care law was going to help hospitals. He said it would help hospitals because uninsured people wouldn't be coming into the emergency room needing free care anymore.

Well, that hasn't happened. Even more people are going to the emergency room today. According to the Wall Street Journal, nonprofit hospitals have seen a huge increase in Medicaid patients—and Medicaid pays only about half of the cost of caring for patients.

The article gives an example of a group of nonprofit hospitals near St. Louis. It has lost about \$5 million as a result of President Obama's Medicaid expansion. That is a big hit for a nonprofit hospital to take. It directly affects hospitals' ability to continue providing high-quality care.

If President Obama is honest today, I would say he needs to explain to this Catholic health care group why his health care law has not lived up to expectations. Is he going to explain why his law is hurting their ability to provide care? It is not only hospitals that are being hurt by ObamaCare, millions of people across the country are seeing the news that their insurance premiums might soar by 20 percent, 30 percent or even more next year.

In North Carolina, Blue Cross Blue Shield says it needs to raise premiums by 26 percent. In Minnesota, Blue Cross wants to raise rates by 54 percent. President Obama spent part of his childhood in Hawaii. One insurance company there is planning to raise premiums by 49 percent.

Will the President explain to this group today why premiums are skyrocketing?

I will tell you why they are skyrocketing. It is because of the cost of all the Washington-mandated services that came from ObamaCare. Another reason costs are going up is all the bureaucracy that came with the health care law.

There was an article in The Hill newspaper May 27 with the headline: "Overhead costs exploding under ObamaCare, study finds."

The article says:

Five years after the passage of ObamaCare, there is one expense that's still causing sticker shock across the health care industry: overhead costs.

It continues:

The administrative costs for healthcare plans are expected to explode by more than a quarter trillion dollars over the next decade, according to a new study.

This is \$270 billion "over and above what would have been expected had the health care law not been enacted."

That is what this study found.

Under the health care law, Washington has been spending billions of taxpayer dollars on health care: \$1 out of every \$4 is going to overhead—not to treat sick or injured people, not to help or prevent disease, no, to overhead. It is the President's law. It is incredible. This money isn't being used to help one sick child, to provide medicine for a single individual, it is overhead.

As one of the study's authors put it, the money "is just going to bureaucracy." According to this study, this works out to \$1,375 per newly insured person per year under Obama's health care law. Now, of course, people's premiums are going through the roof. The health care law created or raised 20 different taxes.

Maybe President Obama today should explain why \$1 out of every \$4 that Washington spends on health care should go to bureaucracy instead of caring for patients. The President's health care law is hurting hard-working American families who are going to have to pay premiums of 40 to 50 percent more next year. It is hurting the hospitals that are supposed to provide

the actual health care to those patients. It is wasting hundreds of billions of dollars on overhead and bureaucracy instead of caring for sick people.

ObamaCare is an expensive disaster. Now, that is not just my opinion. A new poll came out the other day from CNN. It found only 11 percent, only one in nine Americans say the law is a success. President Obama says the law is working. Well, only one in nine agree with him. In another poll, just 39 percent of people support the law. That is down 10 percentage points in 1 year.

You ask: Why is it?

Well, because people look at it and say it is a bad deal for them personally.

The President made promises, and he has broken them. He said: If you like your coverage, you can keep your coverage.

Millions lost their coverage. He said the cost of insurance premiums would drop by \$2,500 per year.

Costs have exploded, the cost of the premiums, the cost of the copays, the cost of the deductibles, and many people who have this expensive new insurance cannot get care. Coverage does not equal care. That is why this health care law is more unpopular now than ever before.

Sometime this month the Supreme Court could make an important decision about the health care law. The Court is set to rule on whether some of the billions of taxpayer dollars that President Obama has been spending were even supposed to be spent under the law. This decision could affect more than 6 million Americans. So you would assume the White House is prepared for the decision. You would assume the White House would have a plan.

Well, does the White House have a plan for these 6 million Americans who are worried about how they will pay for their expensive, new ObamaCare plans with all of its mandates? Not according to the President.

In Germany yesterday, the President refused repeatedly—refused—to talk about a plan B. The closest he came was to say, “Congress could fix this whole thing with a one-sentence provision.” That is not a real solution. People see their premiums going up, and they are very concerned.

President Obama owes America a serious answer. Republicans aren’t interested in a one-sentence fix unless that sentence is: ObamaCare is repealed.

We want to protect the American people from this complicated, confusing, and costly health care law.

If the Court rules against the President, then Republicans will be ready to sit down with Democrats to get some things right. That means stopping ObamaCare’s broken promises and its harmful mandates.

Republicans will offer a plan, and we will work with the President to give people back the freedom, the freedom to make health care choices that work for them and for their families. It will

be up to the President and Democrats in Congress whether they want to join us or if they want to continue with their partisan fight and their delusions that this law is popular and working. I hope they will work with us on the reforms the American people need, want, and deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

ARENA ACT

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise to speak about our Nation’s energy economy.

“Alpha Natural to Lay Off 439 at West Virginia Coal Mine”; “Murray Energy expects more than 1,800 coal mine layoffs”; “Job Cuts Are Devastating Blow for Ohio Valley Coal Miners”; “Coal analyst says industry facing toughest time”; “Power Bills To Get Higher”—these are just some of the headlines that have been in the recent news in my area. These headlines are a stark reminder of the impact misguided Federal policies will have on the lives of real people.

West Virginia and other energy-producing States have suffered devastating blows. Hard-working Americans are losing their jobs as their energy bills keep climbing. I come to the floor to encourage my colleagues to stand up for our Nation’s energy future.

Last month, I introduced the Affordable Reliable Energy Now Act—the ARENA Act—with Leader McCONNELL, Chairman INHOFE, my fellow West Virginian JOE MANCHIN, and nearly 30 of my colleagues. This bipartisan legislation would empower States to protect families and businesses from electricity rate increases, reduced electrical reliability, and other harmful effects of the Clean Power Plan.

The ARENA Act would require that any greenhouse gas standards set by the EPA for new coal-fired powerplants are achievable by commercial powerplants, including highly efficient plants that utilize the most modern, state-of-the-art emissions control technologies.

Back in February, I asked EPA Acting Assistant Administrator Janet McCabe to explain why, despite multiple invitations from Federal and State legislators, the EPA did not hold a public hearing on its proposed Clean Power Plan in West Virginia, given the large role coal plays in our economy and our electricity generation. And do you know what she said? She told me public hearings were held in places where people were “comfortable.” Well, that response is unacceptable to me and to the people of my State. That response, which represents EPA’s disregard for the real-world impacts of its policies, helped shaped this legislation.

The EPA’s proposed greenhouse gas regulations will negatively impact both energy affordability and energy reliability. Coal provided 96 percent of

West Virginia’s electricity last year and West Virginia was among the lowest electricity prices in the Nation. Last year, the average price was 27 percent below the national average, but these low prices are not likely to survive this administration’s policies.

Studies have projected that the Clean Power Plan will raise electricity prices in West Virginia between 12 and 16 percent. Just last month, 450,000 West Virginia families learned of a 16-percent increase in the cost of electricity. While there were multiple factors that contributed to this rate increase, compliance with previous EPA regulations played a significant role. If we allow EPA’s plan to move forward, last week’s rate increase will only be the tip of the iceberg.

Affordable energy matters. Mr. President, 430,000 low- and middle-income families in West Virginia, which is nearly 60 percent of our State’s households, take home an average of less than \$1,900 a month and spend 17 percent of their aftertax income on energy. These families are especially vulnerable to the price increases that will result from the Clean Power Plan.

Other West Virginia families will bear the brunt of the EPA’s policy more directly. In the past few weeks, 1,800 West Virginia coal miners received layoff notices. The notices came at Alpha Natural Resources and Murray Energy—the two largest coal companies in our State. Patriot Coal also filed for bankruptcy for a second time. Three coal-fired powerplants closed, also costing more jobs in the State of West Virginia.

When mines and coal-fired powerplants close, the ripple effect is felt throughout our entire economy. The Wheeling Intelligencer reported that the Murray Energy layoffs alone would mean almost \$62 million in annual lost wages for Ohio Valley residents.

Other parts of our State have been hit just as hard. In Nicholas County, the local government was forced to lay off employees, including a number of sheriff’s deputies, because of a drop in the coal severance tax.

Last month, the Energy Information Agency released its analysis of the proposed rule. The administration’s own energy statistician found that the Clean Power Plan would shut down more than double the coal-fired powerplant capacity we have by the end of this decade.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator’s time has expired.

Mrs. CAPITO. I thank the Chair. I urge support for the ARENA Act, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, what is our parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. NELSON. May I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.