



Written by [William P. Hoar](#) on January 19, 2015

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Correction, Please!

EPA Edicts: Large Price Tag, Little Value



Politicizing his “problems”: While they were at the 2014 Climate Summit at UN headquarters in New York, President Obama gathered representatives from six Mideastern countries that are fighting ISIS. The United States is leading the way in climate and terrorism posturing. *(Photo credit: AP Images)*

Item: *Speaking at the United Nations Summit on Climate Change on September 23, 2014, President Obama claimed that the “climate is changing faster than our efforts to address it. The alarm bells keep ringing. Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them.”*

Item: *Gina McCarthy, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in a statement issued on November 26, 2014, said: “Bringing ozone pollution standards in line with the latest science will clean up our air, improve access to crucial air quality information, and protect those most at-risk.”*

The administrator went on to say: “Fulfilling the promise of the Clean Air Act has always been EPA’s responsibility. Our health protections have endured because they’re engineered to evolve, so that’s why we’re using the latest science to update air quality standards — to fulfill the law’s promise, and defend each and every person’s right to clean air.”

Item: *The New York Times on December 12 happily headlined its piece on the event “Strange Climate Event: Warmth Toward the U.S.” Said the paper: “When it comes to global warming, the United States has long been viewed as one of the world’s worst actors. American officials have been booed and hissed during international climate talks.” Continued the paper: “At the global climate change negotiations now wrapping up in Peru, American negotiators are being met with something wildly unfamiliar: cheers, applause, thanks and praise.” The change grew from “a historic announcement” in November by the United States and China that “they would jointly commit to cut their emissions.”*

Correction: Please do save us. In this case, the real menaces are the reams of technocratic rules that will harm the U.S. economy and do little to remedy the fears about a changing climate. Global warmists worldwide would assuredly love to see the United States become the first to make a lemming leap of economic suicide. They profess that they will be right behind us. Sure.

The vaunted deal with China (as we examined in this column in the previous issue) is folly on an



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international scale. Meanwhile, on the domestic front, we are being targeted with onerous Environmental Protection Administration regulations, which are in various stages of implementation. These cover power-plant emissions, ozone levels, mining, mercury, and more.

Whether you work in the industry or not, you will pay indirectly for these decrees, which is why the EPA's power-plant proposals drew 1.6 million comments by early December. It doesn't take a Mensa member to figure out that most of the Americans commenting were not offering their "cheers, applause, thanks and praise," as did the international environmental activists and bureaucrats in Peru.

A private industry consultancy, Energy Ventures Analysis, calculates that the EPA's new carbon rules alone would push the costs of electricity and natural gas up by nearly \$300 billion in 2020 compared with 2012; over the same period, the annual bills of a typical household for electricity and natural gas would increase by 35 percent and then escalate each year thereafter as the regulations grow more stringent.

Only simple souls or the terminally naïve think this is all being done for the ephemeral goal of an unspoiled planet. We are, after all, talking about Washington, D.C., where shysterism is a way of life and most talk on principles and act on interests. One must also consider, as *National Review* discerned last summer, that the upshot will be what amounts to another tax, and "a relatively large one at that." This effective tax

will be used to underwrite favors for Democratic interest groups while creating corporate subsidies for politically connected businesses — namely, those liberal financiers who have large financial positions in so-called clean-energy technologies and stand to make a hefty profit from government mandates for renewables.

Come for the feel-good greenwashing, stay for the corporate welfare.

As for the ozone regulations, which were made public the day before Thanksgiving, those are even pricier than those dealing with carbon-dioxide emissions. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) believes they may be the costliest regulations in American history. And that is saying something for the EPA, which has had a lot of practice to reach that dubious milestone: According to estimates by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the EPA's regulations accounted for between 43 and 53 percent of the overall costs of all major federal regulations between 2001 and 2011.

In return for new ozone regulations, this is what we will get: a reduction in the gross domestic product of the nation by \$3.4 trillion between 2017 and 2040, as found in a study issued in July by the NAM. In addition, this set of regulations will cut about 2.7 million jobs annually, on average, through 2040. One doesn't hear much in the way of cheers, applause, thanks, and praise for this regulatory edict either. As the *Wall Street Journal* has noted, the "entirely discretionary" ozone rule could cost "as much as \$17 billion a year in return for ever-more-minuscule gains in public health — by the agency's own calculation. Footnote: EPA estimates are always wrong by at least an order of magnitude."

For the EPA to supposedly fulfill the "promise" of the Clean Air Act, the *Wall Street Journal* pointed out, the "agency is using an obscure clause in the Clean Air Act of 1970 known as Section 111(d) to transform U.S. energy policy, though these vague several hundred words have only been applied five times in history to minor problems like particles from pulp mills or municipal landfill gas." However, the



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Journal continued, the EPA cannot use this section

as a general license to supervise the Earth's atmosphere and U.S. economy. In any case — again by the EPA's own estimate — the plan would reduce atmospheric CO₂ by less than 1% and prevent a sea level rise of less than one-thousandth of an inch.

The Communist Chinese, of course, will take what they are given. The deal they got requires them only to say they will begin to make an effort to cut their carbon-dioxide emissions later — way down the road, 16 years from now. The Obama administration, on the other hand, made a “rather severe” commitment, as pointed out by S. Fred Singer, a renowned atmospheric physicist.

Singer is a research fellow at the Independent Institute, a professor emeritus of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, and a former founding director of the U.S. Weather Satellite Service. As he wrote not long ago for the institute, the U.S. government has committed to

an actual reduction of 26-28% in CO₂ emissions by 2025, just 10 years away. This goal can only be achieved by the substitution of natural gas for coal-fired power plants, and the eventual replacement of much of natural gas with unreliable and uneconomic “renewables,” such as wind and solar. As Obama promised in 2008, electricity costs will “skyrocket.”

Indeed, this seems to be the US plan — as spelled out by the EPA, under the direction of the White House. All the China agreement really does is to make Obama look good to his Green constituency, besides providing a convenient “club” to use for his “war on coal.” The expected effect on the global climate is zero, zilch, nada.

From the Chinese point of view, this is an ideal arrangement, and has both commercial and strategic benefits. It makes energy more expensive in the United States and Europe; it cripples the industrial base of the Western World. And hand-in-hand with economic strength goes military strength.

The professor is hardly alone in noting that the administration's Clean Power Plan will do little to mitigate future climate change even if one assumes that these carbon-dioxide regulations work as predicted. John Christy, a well-known atmospheric scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, using the international climate models favored by the global warmists, likewise judges that the climate impact “of these reductions will also be minuscule and thus undetectable and un-attributable.”

Of late, because of advances in drilling, the United States has been going in the right direction in developing our energy sources. That would change dramatically under the Obama administration's latest edicts. Economist Stephen Moore, in an article in the *Washington Times* for November 18, 2014, observed the new regulations that the administration is pushing, in part to meet the requirements of the deal made with China, has Beijing laughing at us.

This would also be the case with additional potential international accords the administration might use to constrain businesses. As Moore observes, the policies being advanced by the Obama administration would put “hundreds of thousands of blue-collar, mostly unionized American workers out of business. Coal regulations alone could render more than 150,000 coal miners, truck drivers and coal-power plant



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workers unemployed. Congratulations, Mr. President. What a victory.”

Yet, the United States, as Moore rightly states,

has already reduced its carbon-dioxide emissions more than any other industrial nation (from 2003 to 2011), thanks to cheap and abundant natural gas. Meanwhile, China’s emissions have skyrocketed.

China is building one coal-burning energy plant nearly every month. The Chinese are trying to figure out how to do fracking so they can get at their oil and gas resources — launching a five-year, \$275 billion plan toward the efforts last year.

They are importing huge amounts of coal from the United States. They just signed a pipeline deal presently valued at \$300 billion with Russian President Vladimir Putin to transport billions of barrels of oil and gas to China.

Does any of this sound like the agenda of a nation that is ready to swear off fossil fuels?

The Environmental Protection Agency, naturally, claims to have “science” on its side in all its diktats. They also have the backing of the establishment media and “green” groups that work cheek by jowl with the administration. A regulation can be undone, but it is more difficult to do so when it has become a fait accompli. Businesses have already been forced to start spending billions to try to meet the requirements handed down from Washington.



For regulatory proponents, time is a factor. Michael Greenstone, the head of the Energy Policy Institute, for example, is worried about who might sit in the White House after the present incumbent. As pointed out in late November 2014 in *The Hill*, a D.C. paper, the director recommended that Obama and the EPA work diligently to make the carbon emissions rule final, “and work with the states to implement it as quickly as possible. ‘Someone’s got to march this across the finish line before the Obama administration leaves town,’ he [Greenstone] said.”

Cost-benefit analyses are often used by businesses and normal Americans to help in making decisions. The EPA is generally above such mundane matters. It decides what to do and then bends what it views as facts to fit. As columnist Paul Driessen put it in December, the so-called Clean Power Plan



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augments numerous other anti-coal regulations. Their imaginary benefits include reduced mercury risks for hypothetical American women who eat 296 pounds of fish a year that they catch themselves, and a “0.00209 point” improvement in IQ test scores.

The Environmental Protection Agency’s particulates standard is equivalent to having 1 ounce of superfine soot dispersed in a volume of air one-half mile long, one-half mile wide and one story tall.

America’s air is already clean, thanks to emission control systems that remove the vast majority of pollutants. Remaining pollutants pose few actual health problems.

Moreover ... China and India will keep burning fossil fuels to lift people out of abject poverty. Even eliminating all U.S. coal and natural gas use will not make an iota of global difference.

Even more insidious is the fact that the EPA regulators, with the blessing of the White House, are willing — even eager — to undermine the Constitution to get what they want. This is the real power that is at stake. Even President Obama’s former law professor at Harvard, the left-wing Laurence Tribe, recognizes that. Tribe, in conjunction with the private Peabody Energy coal company, said as much in a recent and detailed rebuke of the administration’s actions.

The professor, in comments filed in early December, noted (among many other points) that the EPA is likely violating the Fifth Amendment with its “palpable unfairness of imposing all the cost on a small subset of entities [a reference to coal companies] within the agency’s cross-hairs.”

The Obama administration and its henchmen in the EPA may not like certain sources of energy that drive vital economic activities, but that does not give the green vigilantes the right to lynch the Constitution.



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