



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 7, 2014

House Approves Bill to Stop Obama's "War on Coal"

The House of Representatives has approved  a bill to block President Obama's climate plan that aimed at regulating so-called carbon pollution from new power plants. The bill passed by a vote of 229 to 183, with 10 Democrats voting with Republicans and three Republicans opposed.

ABC News explains,

The bill targets Obama's proposal for the Environmental Protection Agency to set the first national limits on heat-trapping carbon pollution from future power plants. It's part of the GOP's election-year strategy to fight back against what Republicans call a "war on coal" by the Obama administration.

President Obama has made no secret of his war on coal. During his 2008 campaign, he told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them."

Later during that same interview, Obama admitted that "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket" under his plan for cap and trade.

The Obama administration's treatment of coal has been heavily criticized as being destructive to the coal industry. In September 2013, *US News* had this to say about the president's EPA rules that set out to dramatically limit emissions:

While [EPA Administrator Gina] McCarthy claims the administration's new rules "provide certainty" to the coal industry, the only "certainty" of their renewed war on coal is that thousands of jobs will be lost and Democrats running for the House and Senate in key states across the country will be further put on the defensive.

Coal is vital to electrical production in the United States, responsible for approximately half the electrical generation in the last 10 years.

The new bill (sponsored by Rep. Ed Whitfield [R-Ky.]) which would put a stop to Obama's proposed rules, requires that the EPA set carbon emissions standards based on technology in use for at least a full year. Those opposed to the EPA's rule assert that it is based on carbon-capturing technology that is not currently in existence and is therefore an unfair standard to set.

"The Obama administration clearly wants to use its regulatory agenda to end coal-fired power generation in this country, but that is a pipe dream," declared Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho).

Whitfield called the EPA proposal "one of the most extreme regulations of the Obama administration." He said the proposed limits on carbon emissions would "make it impossible to build a new coal-fired power plant in America."

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy has defended the proposed rule, saying it is based on carbon reduction methods that are "technically feasible" and still under development at four sites.

"We looked at the data available. We looked at the technologies," McCarthy told the Senate



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Environment Committee in January. "We made a determination that [carbon capture and storage technology] was the best system for emission reductions for coal facilities moving forward, because it was technically feasible and it would lead to significant emission reductions."

Rep. Whitfield, the new bill's sponsor, explains that his legislation was necessary because the EPA has failed to respond to complaints regarding the earlier proposed rule.

Unsurprisingly, Democrats are angered by the House-passed bill. Representative Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) dubbed it a "science denial bill" that he claimed would dramatically reduce the EPA's ability to block pollution.

President Obama has already threatened to veto the measure, asserting it will "undermine public health protections of the Clean Air Act and stop U.S. progress in cutting dangerous carbon pollution from power plants."

The administration issued a statement prior to the vote, declaring that the new legislation would "stifle progress in reducing carbon pollution by discouraging the adoption of currently available and effective technology, and would limit further development of cutting-edge clean energy technologies."

It added, "Finally, the bill could delay indefinitely reductions in carbon pollution from existing power plants by prohibiting forthcoming rules from taking effect until Congress passes legislation setting the effective date of the rules."

A White House statement has attacked the Republican bill as one that "threatens the health and economic welfare of future generations by blocking important standards to reduce carbon pollution from the power sector."

Republicans have countered this claim by pointing out that the EPA's efforts would increase electricity costs by as much as \$1,200 per household.

Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) observes that the EPA rule would hurt job creation and put people at a financial disadvantage:

This regulation will cause the greatest amount of harm, lost jobs, diminished incomes, and higher electricity bills in areas where incomes are modest, as are the lifestyles of those who live there. It isn't the rich on Fifth Avenue or in Beverly Hills who will be impacted; it is the American working class.

Republicans contend that the EPA has purposely been stalling passage of the power plant rule so that it does not become finalized until after the 2014 midterm elections. ABC News explains:

EPA Administrator McCarthy announced the proposal in September, but the measure was not printed in the *Federal Register* until January. The delay means the rule is unlikely to be completed until next year. A public comment period on the rule was supposed to expire next week, but has been extended until May 9.

A similar bill in the Senate, sponsored by Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) requires the EPA to set standards based on current technology.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has voiced uncertainty that Manchin's bill would get a vote in the Senate.

McConnell spokesman Don Stewart remarked, "If the president doesn't want [the bill], Harry Reid is going to block it, even if it is good for jobs and even if it's good for Kentucky."



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Reports indicate that Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid will be meeting with other Democrats to discuss how to proceed, but few seem to have much hope of progress.

The three Republicans who voted against the bill to stop the EPA rule were Reps. Chris Gibson of New York, Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington, and Frank LoBiondo of New Jersey.

Those Democrats who voted in favor of the bill were Reps. John Barrow and Sanford Bishop, both of Georgia; Jim Costa of California; Henry Cuellar of Texas; Bill Enyart of Illinois; Jim Matheson of Utah; Mike McIntyre of North Carolina; Collin Peterson of Minnesota; Nick Rahall of West Virginia; and Terri Sewell of Alabama.



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