



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on August 9, 2013

Obama EPA War on Coal to Shut 200+ Coal-Fired Plants, Devastate Economy

America is staring at a fast-approaching energy disaster that needn't happen. The recent discovery and development of vast deposits of oil and natural gas, now recoverable with new technologies, have provided the U.S. economy with a much-needed boost over the past several years. These new energy sources also offer promise of increasing America's competitive advantage by drastically lowering energy costs and reducing American dependence on foreign oil. This is of critical importance to luring manufacturing and industry back to the United States.



However, coal, one of our most abundant and important sources of energy, will remain a major component of any viable energy scheme for the United States. According to the federal Energy Information Agency (EIA), 45 percent of the country's annual four trillion kilowatt-hours of electricity are generated from coal. And, [says the EIA](#), we have a Demonstrated Reserve Base of 496 billion short tons of coal, of which 272 billion tons are considered recoverable with current technology. With U.S. usage at 1.1 billion tons per year, we have about 250 years' supply at the present rate of consumption.

President Obama, however, has taken the path of the most extreme environmental radicals and declared war on coal. Since he has not been able to get Congress to enact legislation to destroy the coal industry, he is unconstitutionally using the EPA to regulate coal into extinction.

On August 2, the Reuters news service provided a [list of 207 coal-fired plants that are scheduled to close](#). A May 2 news release from the [American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity](#) (ACCCE) puts the total of coal-fired plant closings even higher, at 285, in 32 states.

If Congress does not restrain the EPA's regulatory binge, Americans will be hit not only with much higher electricity prices, but also with brownouts and blackouts, especially during the cold winter months and hot summer spells, when heaters and air conditioners put the squeeze on power grids. Warnings of potential brownouts and the need for the public to ease up on air conditioning, as issued recently in [Boston](#) and [New York](#), will become commonplace if coal is banished as an energy source.

Barack Obama's antipathy toward coal is no secret. During his first presidential run, in 2008, candidate Obama let it be known that his plan was to bankrupt the coal industry with huge fees and impossible-to-comply-with regulations, all under the pretext of saving the planet from the discredited threat of global warming. Then-Senator Obama [told the San Francisco Chronicle](#): "So if somebody wants to build a coal-powered plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them because they are going to be charged a huge sum for all that greenhouse gas that's being emitted."

Ed Hiserodt explained in *The New American* last year in ["Coal: The Rock That Burns"](#):

Despite the increasing cleanliness of the air in the United States, Obama's EPA is implementing



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extremely burdensome regulations, purportedly to clean up air pollution. However, the implementation requirements of the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule reveal its purpose of punishing coal-fired generation: The modifications required for any power plant are tremendous in terms of engineering man-hours, design of site-specific control devices, and lengthy shutdowns for construction purposes. Years of planning and ordering capital equipment are necessary for even seemingly minor projects.

Obama Advisor Admits “War on Coal”

One of President Obama’s top environmental advisers, Prof. Daniel Schrag, who runs Harvard University’s Center for the Environment, publicly let the cat out of the bag in a [recent interview with the New York Times](#). Prof. Schrag told the *Times*:

Politically, the White House is hesitant to say they’re having a war on coal. On the other hand, a war on coal is exactly what’s needed.

In short, the administration is trying to appear moderate and attempting to portray its anti-coal crusade as a commonsense response to protect public health and safety by regulating coal air emissions and water pollution. But stripped of its camouflage, the Obama EPA is indeed engaged in a war on coal.

Prof. Schrag, a full-blown global-warming alarmist, is less inclined to mince words. He is also less than collegial and tolerant when it comes to debating fellow scientists who do not share his hysterical views on climate change. After [testifying before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in 2006](#), Schrag took to the pages of the *Boston Globe* to denounce the distinguished scientists and professors who had provided testimony contradicting his alarmism as “a gathering of liars and charlatans, sponsored by those industries who want to protect their profits.”

Not exactly civil, professional behavior on the part of Prof. Schrag, but it is typical of the zealotry of the Green Lobby that has encamped about Obama and his appointments that populate the regulatory agencies.

Gina McCarthy “Fuel-switching” Tactic: Natural Gas vs. Coal

Leading the FedGov regulatory blitzkrieg on coal is the EPA. Things are not likely to improve there under Gina McCarthy, Obama’s newly appointed EPA administrator, who was confirmed by the Senate in July, on a 59-40 vote. In a June 26 story for CFACT (Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow), [Dr. Bonner Cohen reported](#):

In 2012, the Obama EPA issued its “new source performance standard” that effectively made it impossible to build new coal-fired power plants, because no technology exists that would enable utilities to meet the new standards. At the time, the head of EPA’s air office, Gina McCarthy, assured the public that existing plants would not have to meet the new standard and that EPA was not promoting fuel-switching. Less than a year after McCarthy’s solemn promise, however, the following sentence appears on page 19 of Obama’s Climate Action Plan: “Going forward, we will promote fuel-switching from coal to gas for electricity production and encourage the development for a global market for gas.”

Dr. Cohen points out: “While natural gas extracted from America’s vast shale formations will be able to fill some of the gap, the elimination of coal as a power source will put huge strains on the already weak economy and on household budgets.”

More importantly, as Dr. Cohen warns, the enthusiasm for natural gas expressed by many greenies is a



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cynical ploy, intended to ease the demise of coal. But once coal is shut down, the greens will turn their sights on gas and oil. Cohen writes:

And what is to keep the war on coal from morphing into a war on gas? While most Americans welcome the jobs and lower power rates the Shale Revolution has made possible, the Obama administration and its allies in the environmental movement remain firm in their hostility to fossil fuels. After coal has been regulated out of existence, green elites will not hesitate to go after natural gas and oil. EPA bureaucrats and Obama administration political appointees are already devising schemes to bring about federal regulation of hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking.

Congress Is the Key

As *The New American* has reported previously ([“Obama Eyes ‘Executive Orders’ to Circumvent Congress”](#)), President Obama is pursuing a path of rule by executive fiat, relegating Congress to irrelevancy. He has shown by word and deed that he intends to implement his agenda by executive orders and agency rule-making, disregarding all constitutional constraints.

Between January of this year and the August recess, Congress enacted 22 laws. By contrast, the federal government’s website for information on the non-stop avalanche of federal rules and regulations, informs us that unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats have posted thousands of new rules and regulations — in just the past 90 days! According to www.regulations.gov (as posted on August 8), the following onslaught is currently in the pipeline:

- Today (104)
- Last 3 Days (270)
- Last 7 Days (493)
- Last 15 Days (1,065)
- Last 30 Days (2,155)
- Last 90 Days (6,571)

It is worthwhile to pause to reflect on those figures for a moment or two. In a little over seven months, Congress passed 22 pieces of legislation. Meanwhile, federal bureaucrats saddled the country with 6,571 regulations, rules, interpretations, and administrative dicta — in just 90 days! The Obama administration’s war on coal is but one front, albeit a major one, in an all-out revolutionary assault on the rule of law, that is transforming what remains of our constitutional republic into a dictatorship.

The Unconstitutional Fourth Branch of Government

As we noted last year in [“Danger: Federal ‘Regulatory Cliff’ Ahead”](#):

The very first sentence of Article I, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution states: “All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.” It is difficult to get more plain and definitive than that: “All legislative powers.” Congress is the legislative branch, and it possesses “all legislative powers.” The executive and judicial branches have their own peculiar jurisdictions and purviews, but their powers do not include lawmaking. Nor does the Constitution allow the Congress to sublet or delegate its lawmaking authority to the president, bureaucrats, or judges. Moreover, Congress has only those legislative powers “herein granted,” which means, of course, that Congress may not legislate on whatever its members may wish, but only regarding



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those particular matters granted by the states in the Constitution.

Nevertheless, Congress (and the American people, whose duty it is to vigilantly monitor Congress) has allowed the executive branch to stealthily, steadily build an enormous fourth branch of government — the federal regulatory leviathan — that has usurped legislative, executive, and judicial powers. According to our Founders, this is “the very definition of tyranny.”

James Madison, frequently referred to as the “Father of the Constitution,” addressed this issue in essay No. 47 of *The Federalist*, noting: “The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.”

Constitutionalists who are determined to stop America’s devolution into administrative tyranny should avail themselves of the opportunity to press members of Congress while they are home on recess to stop the administration’s usurpation of powers through regulation. Ultimately, citizen activists must convince Congress to abolish the unconstitutional agencies that threaten our continued existence as a free people.

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