



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 14, 2015

President Unveils Plan to Eviscerate Energy Boom With Methane Mandates

On Wednesday, President Obama announced plans to move ahead with mandating methane emission reductions [primarily directed](#) at the renaissance in the energy industry.



This unleashes his Environmental Protection Agency to create new rules to limit methane emissions from cows, landfills, coal mines and, most particularly, the oil and gas industry. Unless derailed or challenged successfully by Congress, the new rules would become effective in late 2016.

Dan Utech, special assistant to the president for climate change, promised that the EPA's new rules, which will be intended to cut methane emissions nearly in half over the next decade, will "have benefits for the climate, the economy, and public health."

What they will do is support the green lobby's long campaign for federal action to reduce emissions that allegedly contribute mightily to "global warming" while also retarding the energy boom now on the verge of serious shrinkage due to the very success of that boom.

The new rules will address primarily methane emissions emanating from the energy's infrastructure — pipelines, drilling operations, and transportation — that amount to less than nine percent of those worrisome gases allegedly polluting the atmosphere and threatening increased global temperatures. The mandates will be issued despite the fact that those emissions have actually declined between 11 and 15 percent since 1990, depending on the data source used. Even Utech admits that those emissions have lessened without federal regulations, but that doesn't matter to him. He asserts,

Since 1990, methane pollution in the United States has decreased by 11 percent, even as activities that can produce methane have increased. However, methane pollution is projected to increase ... absent additional action to reduce emissions.

In other words, the new rules aren't designed to solve an existing problem, one that is already apparently solving itself without federal intervention. They are designed to head off a supposed problem in the future.

Rhea Suh, president of the green lobby Natural Resources Defense Council, made it clear that the new federal attack is directed at the energy industry: "[Meeting that goal] will require EPA to curb methane pollution from all existing oil and gas operations across the nation, not just those in some parts of the country."

In case one missed it, in order to make the new rules effective "across the nation," they will override private property protections and states' powers to regulate methane. These proposed regulations ignore the industry's own self-interest in keeping those methane emissions to a minimum because it would cost them money otherwise.



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Jack Gerard, CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, was quick to note the negative impact such rules would have on an industry already reeling from the consequences of a temporary oversupply. He stated, “Another layer of burdensome regulations could actually slow down industry progress to reduce methane emissions.”

The new rules coming in 2016 are to plug a loophole in existing laws, as David Doniger, also of the Natural Resources Defense Council, points out:

[The new rules represent] the largest opportunity to deal with climate pollution that his administration has not already seized. It’s the largest thing left, and it’s the most cost-effective thing they can do that they haven’t done already.

Wednesday’s announcement no doubt delights Cornell Professor Robert Howarth, who has long championed such regulations, as he thinks they will have an effect on supposed “global warming” much more quickly than regulations limiting carbon dioxide. He avers:

Research shows that because of lags in the climate system, reducing carbon dioxide pollution will have little or no influence on the rate of global warming over the coming several decades....

On the other hand, the Earth’s climate responds much more quickly to reductions in methane and we can greatly slow the rate of global warming during the critical next few decades by reducing methane emission. We clearly need to reduce emissions of both carbon dioxide and methane. And the pathway is clear: a rapid transition to relying solely on renewable energy resources....

Any other policy will be disastrous for the planet.

The move to cut methane emissions in the oil patch will slow the energy juggernaut further — to the delight of environmentalist extremists who want to leave the oil and gas in the ground where they think it belongs. It will also make energy more expensive for average Americans and raise the costs of many industrial processes, further lowering Americans’ standard of living. Reducing Americans’ access to cheap, efficient energy is what is really going on here. Hopefully Congress will have enough sense to stand up to such behavior from the executive branch and pass real legislation to curtail the EPA’s pretend “legislative” behavior. Better yet, Congress ought to abolish the EPA entirely, as it is an unconstitutional agency created by executive order.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.



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