

Wyo Democratic official: 'Recognize reality and deal with it'

Barrasso criticizes Obama climate, energy policies

By DUSTIN BLEIZEFFER - Star-Tribune energy reporter | Posted: Friday, December 18, 2009 12:15 am



Giant trucks wait in line to be loaded with coal in one of the massive mines of Wyoming's Powder River Basin. Wyoming elected officials are concerned about the impact of proposed carbon limits on the state's coal industry. (Dustin Bleizeffer/Star-Tribune file photo)

U.S. Sen. John Barrasso and six other Republican senators warned President Barack Obama this week that the Senate is unlikely to support any U.S. agreement made in Copenhagen to reduce global warming that doesn't also include China and other developing countries.

In a letter to the president, the GOP lawmakers also said they intend to block the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases -- a move that the Obama administration admits is largely ineffective but places pressure on Congress to pass some type of carbon regulation sooner rather than later.

"With 10 percent unemployment and a \$1.4 trillion deficit, it's already outrageous that the Obama administration is working on a binding international climate change agreement that will kill more American jobs and decrease our economic growth," Barrasso said in a prepared statement this week.

In recent days Barrasso has also criticized the administration for promising billions of dollars to help preserve the world's forests, and said the administration is threatening Wyoming jobs with its move to review all state-issued coal permits.

Earlier this week, Wyoming Democratic Chairwoman Leslie Petersen told the Star-Tribune that Republicans in Congress seem more intent on blocking energy and climate policies than reshaping them.

"The party of no just keeps saying no to everything. The wiser course is it recognize reality and deal with it," Petersen said.

She said the Wyoming Democratic Party may not like the details of a Copenhagen agreement, but state Democrats continue to support the state's aggressive jobs-related approach to promoting cleaner energy technology, such as the University of Wyoming's partnership in coal-gasification and carbon sequestration research.

U.S. Rep. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyo., issued a press release Thursday saying she's also a signatory on a letter to President Obama "calling on him to redirect stimulus funding towards the purchase of advanced

energy technology from American-owned manufacturers for heavily polluting Chinese power plants in return for selling back some of the more than \$800 billion in debt held by the Chinese."

However, many believe that China has already surpassed the United States in developing cleaner energy technologies. Conservation groups argue that U.S. innovation likely will not catch up unless industries are mandated to switch to carbon-reducing technologies.

Richard Garrett, legislative and outreach advocate for the Wyoming Outdoor Council, said he shares Barrasso's concern for preserving Wyoming jobs in fossil fuels. However, a sound carbon regulation policy can help preserve those and add new jobs in clean energy.

"Borrowing a phrase from Sen. Barrasso, I believe we can have red, white and blue jobs, and we can have green jobs if we do the right thing," Garrett said.

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