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Obama plans to cut carbon output

By Blake Deppe

As part of a planned comprehensive climate change strategy, President Obama will announce an effort in July to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, targeting power plants, one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gases. This will be one aspect of a larger agenda that will focus on three broad environmental areas over which the Obama administration has rule-making powers. The other efforts will be improving the energy efficiency of appliances and expanding clean energy development.

Curbing carbon emissions will be a major step in the battle against global warming, one that follows a successful mercury emission reduction plan (the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards) enacted by the Environmental Protection Agency in January 2012. Those safeguards are expected to prevent 11,000 premature deaths and 4,700 heart attacks per year. The upcoming preventative measures, meanwhile, will go several steps further, and are expected to become a powerful tool in not only improving health, but significantly slashing greenhouse gas emissions - perhaps by 40 percent or more in the long term.

Obama's plan, of course, is bound to be strongly criticized by Republicans, and may even need to face legal challenges by the GOP and fos-



sil fuel industries. The administration's initiative would be taken with executive power; it would not need legislative action or financing by Congress, according to Heather Zichal, White House coordinator for energy and climate change.

Such plans were part of Obama's climate change talk in a June 19 speech in Berlin, Germany. He explained that the nation and the world have a moral imperative to take action to fight global warming. "The grim alternative affects all

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nations; more severe storms, more famine and floods, new waves of refugees, coastlines that vanish, oceans that rise," he said. "This is the global threat of our time. We have to get to work."

Zichal added that climate change is a "second term priority" for the president, who "knows this

The EPA was given the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in 2007.

is a legacy issue. The administration has already begun steps to restrict climate-altering emissions from any newly-built power plants, but imposing carbon standards on the existing utility fleet will be vastly more costly. But the EPA has been working very hard on rules that focus specifically on greenhouse gases from the coal sector. They're doing a lot of important work in that space."

She remarked that leaders in Washington need to start listening to the public on this issue, and, moreover, to "catch up" with public opinion on climate change. "Most Americans have stopped debating whether the planet is warming, and are busy trying to protect their communities from its impact."

The EPA was given the authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in a 2007 Supreme Court decision, and therefore, in this instance, does not need to contend with Republicans' obnoxious habit of fighting environmental legislation tooth and nail.

"We are encouraged to find that there are tools available to do this without Congress," said Nicholas Bianco, who authored a World Resources Institute report on greenhouse gas output and its

potential reduction. "The other encouraging sign is that the administration appears to be ready to tackle climate in this second term."

Carbon output increased by 1.4 percent in 2012, reaching an all-time high of 31.6 gigatonnes. Such emissions have caused droughts and heat waves, exacerbated tropical cyclones and changed storm patterns, harmed agriculture production, and caused sea levels to rise.

Al Gore recently said that climate change was a highly important issue in which the president certainly ought to work around the roadblocks put up by Congress; this plan is expected to be one of the first big examples of that. "It is important for him to regulate carbon dioxide emissions," Gore said. "He doesn't need Congress to do [this]. If it hurts the feelings of people in the carbon polluting industries, that's too bad."

"The effort to slow climate change requires bold action," Obama continued. "Peace with justice means refusing to condemn our children to a harsher, less hospitable planet."



Blake Deppe writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Obamacare is already lowering costs

By PW Editorial

While all of the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, don't go effect until next year, the president's signature health care law has already had a remarkable impact on health care costs. One example is the ACA expanded Medicare's competitive bidding program on durable medical equipment, like wheelchairs. While the competitive bidding program has so far saved \$202 million in its first year it is estimated to save up to \$42.8 billion over the next ten years.

According to a recent Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) report:

* seniors and people with disabilities in Medicare will directly save a projected \$17.1 billion due to lower co-insurance payments for durable medical equipment;

* taxpayers are projected to save an additional \$25.7 billion through the Medicare Supplementary Medical Trust Fund due to reduced prices;

* last year alone, people with Medicare saved up to \$105 on hospital beds, \$168 on oxygen con-

centrators, and \$140 on diabetic test strips;

* and, a real time claims monitoring system, set up to ensure that access to supplies was not compromised, has found that Medicare recipients continue to have access to all necessary and appropriate items. "Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, we can expand this successful example of health care reform to include more areas and achieve savings on a national level," DHHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently told reporters. "People with Medicare across the country will get the medical equipment they need to live their lives, while saving them and other taxpayers money in the process." By 2016, everybody will benefit from the competitive bidding program. Markets not directly impacted by the bidding program will also likely have lower rate dues to the downward pressure on costs. In all, starting July 1 the competitive bidding program will begin to lower costs for over 15 million beneficiaries.

This is important progress in the right direction.

The ACA is already proving that health care costs can be lowered, while benefits are increased.

Rally slams Republicans' "Education Inc." agenda

By John Rummel

Pam Kirchens believes that a free quality public education is the cornerstone of a democratic society and that every child in Michigan deserves access to equal and excellent public education. That's why she joined with others to form a grassroots group called Save Michigan's Public Schools. Kirchens and several thousand others rallied at the state capitol in Lansing to deliver that message.

The June 19 rally came about, she said, out of a group of seven or eight teachers, parents and concerned citizens were alarmed about the attacks on public education in Michigan. They started meeting monthly at a deli in Ann Arbor, Mich., and came up with the idea of holding a rally.

"It was total grassroots, we have no money," Kirchens said.

With a Republican-dominated and tea-party influenced legislature, Michigan Republicans are dismantling public education by defunding it, setting up state-controlled school districts that eliminate collective bargaining and seniority, and advocating unlimited numbers of charter and on-line schools.

Educators and the public were incensed by the recent comments of Republican state Rep. Lisa Lyons, the House Education Committee Chairperson. Talking about the dissolution of the financially troubled Buena Vista and Inkster school districts, Lyons, in response to school employee concerns that they would not have jobs in the new



House floor, "Pigs get fat, hogs get slaughtered."

Several demonstrators at the Capitol held signs showing their anger with the crude insult.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mark Schauer told the crowd it is no wonder the state's schools are in financial crisis. Referring to the current governor, Republican Rick Snyder, Schauer said, "The governor took \$1 billion from public schools to help pay for a \$1.8 billion corporate dollar tax cut."

Republicans place "profit over people and kids," Schauer said. "Education Inc. is their agenda." Two public high school students made strong impressions on the rally participants. Billy Dering, a flute player in his Ann Arbor high school marching band, told the crowd he has Tourette's syndrome, a neural disorder. He confidently explained why a comprehensive education, one that includes art, physical education and music, is so necessary. Music helps him coordinate his movements, keep his focus, and alleviate some of his symptoms, he said.

"For all children, with or without disabilities, music helps them become stronger students," Dering said.

Republicans place profit over people and kids.

Neighbors support fired Domino's worker

By Gabe Falsetta

The Bushwick community of Brooklyn came out in force to support Gregory Reynoso, a worker at Domino's Pizza who has been fired in retaliation for organizing his fellow workers to secure a \$15-an-hour wage and to have union representation. The demonstration of support was organized by the Fast Food Organizing committee.

Truvon Shim, a neighborhood resident backing Reynoso, said, "I'm here because Domino's illegally fired one of their workers. I'm here to help him get his job back. We are getting people to sign petitions because as you know the workers in the neighborhood is what makes the business go round.

"We want to let Domino's know that it is unfair to do this to your workers, especially when they are killing themselves to make you richer. The community is buying it; the workers are working; you're just sitting back and getting rich. They're just trying to do something better for themselves. Just support the cause."

Reverend Cheri Kroon, Associate Minister of the Flatbush Reformed Church, said, "I'm really concerned about my neighborhood. What I see in my neighborhood and all over New York City is that many of the people who live in my neighborhood work in fast food restaurants and the majority of them are not making a living."

The Communications Workers of America and several New York City Council members joined the demonstration.

G.O.P. vota contra los Dreamers

Por Emile Schepers

El jueves, la Cámara de Representantes votó mayormente en línea partidista para evitar que el gobierno de Obama de "un descanso" (break) a los inmigrantes indocumentados traídos aquí como niños. Esto sucede al tiempo que el pleno del senado comienza a debatir S 744, el proyecto principal de inmigración que fue aprobado por el Comité Judicial del Senado, y al momento en que se hacen esfuerzos para crear una legislación bipartidista también en la Cámara.

Presionado por el movimiento de los derechos de los inmigrantes y de sus aliados por los derechos laborales y civiles, el presidente Obama anunció el año pasado que el gobierno suspendería indefinidamente la deportación de inmigrantes indocumentados que fueron traídos a los Estados Unidos sin documentos antes de su cumpleaños 16, y que aún no habían cumplido los treinta. Este programa, llamado DACA (Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia), fue ampliamente aclamada en las comunidades inmigrantes y latinas y su aplicación ha estado siendo implementada. Una segunda iniciativa del programa de la administración de Obama, llamada "discreción fiscal", debía supuestamente instruir a los funcionarios del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE) para limitar acciones de deportación solo para personas con antecedentes penales o que representan una amenaza para el

público. Esto no ha estado funcionando muy bien porque al parecer el personal del ICE está interpretando estos criterios de manera máximamente desfavorable para los inmigrantes.

El resultado fue un voto de una enmienda para una ley de financiamiento para el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional. Fue presentada por el representante Steve King (R-Iowa), quien tiene una larga historia en demagogia anti-inmigrante. La votación fue de 224 a favor, 201 en contra y 9 sin votar. Sólo 6 republicanos votaron en contra de la enmienda, y sólo 3 demócratas votaron a favor.

Se espera que muchos de los congresistas republicanos que votaron a favor de la enmienda King apoyen algún tipo de reforma migratoria al final, y esto probablemente incluirá una disposición que permita a los jóvenes a adquirir estatus legal. La propia "Ganga de los Ocho" de la Casa esta pronta a anunciar su propio proyecto de ley de inmigración, que se espera se parezca a la del senado de una u otra manera. El presidente Obama ha dicho en todo caso que vetará el proyecto principal, con la enmienda King. La administración y los demócratas han denunciado la movida republicana. En 12 de junio, una delegación de unos 40 niños, incluyendo "soñadores" y niños ciudadanos estadounidenses cuyos padres han sido deportados se reunió con miembros del Congreso para pedir que la legislación final, permite un mecanismo para el regreso de sus padres.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523

Email: contact@peoplesworld.org