WASHINGTON — The Obama administration rolled out a plan Monday to cut carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by 30% by 2030, setting in motion one of the most significant actions on global warming in U.S. history.

But exactly how states will meet customized targets likely will be pushed to the next administration. States could have until 2017 to submit a plan to cut power plant pollution, and 2018 if they join with other states to tackle the problem, according to the EPA’s proposal. An executive order issued last summer had set a June 2016 deadline for state plans.

The 645-page rule, expected to be final next year, is a centerpiece of President Barack Obama’s plans to reduce the pollution linked to global warming, a step that the administration hopes will get other countries to act when negotiations on a new international treaty resume next year.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy was expected to stress in remarks delivered at EPA headquarters later Monday that the rule would “ambitious, but achievable.”

“The glue that holds this plan together — and the key to making it work —
is that each state’s goal is tailored to its own circumstances, and states have the flexibility to reach their goal in whatever works best for them,” McCarthy said, according to prepared remarks released in advance.

Despite concluding in 2009 that greenhouse gases endanger human health and welfare, a finding that triggered their regulation under the 1970 Clean Air Act, it has taken years for the administration to take on the nation’s fleet of power plants. In December 2010, the Obama administration announced a “modest pace” for setting greenhouse gas standards for power plants, setting a May 2012 deadline.

Obama put them on the fast track last summer when he announced his climate action plan and a renewed commitment to climate change after the issue went dormant during his re-election campaign.

“Today, the president made good on his promise to American families that his administration would tackle the climate crisis, and clean up and modernize the way we power our country,” said Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune.

Power plants are the largest source of greenhouse gases in the U.S., accounting for about a third of the annual emissions that make the U.S. the second largest contributor to global warming on the planet. Yet the rule carries significant political and legal risks, which were heightened by the EPA giving states beyond 2016 to submit plans.

The rule will help further diminishing coal’s role in producing U.S. electricity. Coal, which once supplied about half the nation’s electricity, has dropped to 40% as it has been replaced by booming supplies of natural gas and renewable sources such as wind and solar.

“Today’s proposal from the EPA could singlehandedly eliminate this competitive advantage by removing reliable and abundant sources of energy from our nation’s energy mix,” Jay Timmons, president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, said in a statement issued Sunday.

The White House said Obama called a group of Democrats from both the House and Senate on Sunday to thank them for their support in advance of the rule’s official release, which is expected to be rigorously attacked by Republicans and make Democrats up for re-election in energy-producing states nervous.

EPA data shows that the nation’s power plants have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 13 per cent since 2005, or about halfway to the goal the administration will set Monday. The agency is aiming to have about 26% cut by 2020.

But with coal-fired power plants already beleaguered by cheap natural gas prices and other environmental regulations, experts said getting there won’t be easy. The EPA is expected to offer a range of options to states to meet targets that will be based on where they get their electricity and how much carbon dioxide they emit in the process.

While some states will be allowed to emit more and others less, overall the reduction will be 30% nationwide.

The options include making power plants more efficient, reducing the frequency at which coal-fired power plants supply power to the grid, and investing in more renewable, low-carbon sources of energy. In addition, states could enhance programs aimed at reducing demand by making households and businesses more energy-efficient. Each of those categories will have a separate target tailor-made for each state.
Obama has already tackled the emissions from the nation's cars and trucks, announcing rules to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by doubling fuel economy. That standard will reduce carbon dioxide by more than 2 billion tons over the life of vehicles made in model years 2012-25. The power plant proposal will prevent about 430 million tons of carbon dioxide from reaching the atmosphere, based on the 30% figure and what power plants have already reduced since 2005.
Guest  •  a year ago
So this then is Obama's energy master plan. Really, it's-no plan at all, but rather a-plan to make-a-plan or, even more precisely, to have-others make-the-plan for him. The beauty of-the-scheme is that if fully realized Obama would seek to have-the-initiative attributed to himself even though it would be-the-countless and-others that come after him that would be charged with implementing, not-a-plan, because there is no-plan, but rather, his great vision that would see CO2 levels reduced solely for the sake of-reducing them. I say that because whatever succeeds in reducing will be made up ten fold by what China, India and the other-BRICS and BRACS build anew with no measurable effect whatever on-the-climate. This isn't about-saving the planet, it's about creating-a mythical legacy for himself.

Guest  •  a year ago
The irony: a plan to make a plan is a plan

Guest  •  a year ago
If the plan was more restrictive, you'd complain that it was too tough. Now you complain that it's too easy. I think you just don't like Obama.

Cash0  •  a year ago
But when people want to restrict those countries, they're called racist. All we can do is police ourselves, and try to lead by example (if you think AGW is a real concern).

Master of my Domain  •  a year ago
As mrquetiapine says, dispute the argument. Obama has pushed controversial decisions. While he forced the Health Care Act through, his environmental policies have been limited to more passive-aggressive style of stalling, appeasing his environmental backers while doing little actually make a change where he can be held accountable.

This was a great opportunity as few believe getting rid of coal is the wrong decision, but even here he waffles and makes future administrations do the heavy lifting. The proposals will allow states to exceed the rules, while decisions on how and where will be made after he leaves office.

Had he spent less time avoiding KXL, this could have been done earlier.

Lingonbay  •  a year ago
Master of my Domain.

Nonsense. Obama has made lots of progress on environmental issues with large and on reduction of CO2 and other emissions despite being opposed at every turn by an obstructionist Congress. Harper, despite having a large rump of trained seals in parliament, has done less than nothing. Canada has been backwards environmentally in recent years. I'm not saying it's easy for Harper to tackle emissions. It's not. But criticism of Obama with respect to any environmental issues misses the mark.

Mrquetiapine  •  a year ago
I'm sure he hates him but what does that have to do with his...
huge ramifications and wide margins of error and he also
have the time or political will to push it through himself
sounds a lot more likely than "It's no plan at all, but rather a plan
to make a plan or, even more precisely, to have others make
for him".

This argument is about Obama's motives, and there's
lots of simpler interpretations.

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cash0 • a year ago

"EPA data shows that the nation's power plants have reduced carbon
dioxide emissions by nearly 13 per cent since 2005, or about halfway to
the goal the administration will set Monday. The agency is aiming to
have about 26% cut by 2020."

 Doesn't sound too onerous for businesses. I think slowly improving efficiencies
is better than doing nothing and ignoring science's concerns. For example, we had 30
in the 80's, and we still are there with huge SUV's in spite of new technologies.

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Lingonbay • cash0 • a year ago

cash0,

The simple fact is that Obama is making steady and significant progress reducing emissions - in spite of a Congress that has been fighting every suggestion that he has made. These new emissions standards are a big step forward. Earlier, the Obama administration introduced new CAFE fuel efficiency standards for cars - which will reduce petroleum consumption by true fuel savings of 23% by 2025 and even more as continued fleet replacement takes place. The US has closed or announced the retirement of 150 coal plants over the last three years - nearly one plant a week. US oil consumption peaked in 2007. Consumption will never go back to the 2007 peak value. US CO2 emissions have been dropping steadily since 2007. The same cannot be said of Canada, where most of the progress in reducing emissions in Canada has been made in Ontario. Emissions standards for the oil industry promised by the Harper government 8 years ago have not yet been introduced... And on and on. The bottom line is that, over the course of the last 6 years, Obama has delivered the goods.

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Soilentgreene • cash0 • a year ago

I agree with you cash. Except the numbers are even better than you mention. That's a quote for the EPA, not Obama's plan. Obama wants 30% by 2030, starting from a baseline year of 2012. Over 18 years, that's only -1.73%/year. Increasing the natural rate from 1.73% to 1.96% seems absurdly easy. The switch from coal emissions to natural gas from the frakking trend will cover this all on their own. This plan is all smoke and mirrors.

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pwoggs • cash0 • a year ago

That is because fracking for Natural Gas has made it cheaper to run Power Plants on Natural Gas. The Anti Frack people will hate this.

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EWWilson • pwoggs • a year ago

Actually coal is cheaper than natural gas when natural gas is currently natural gas is $4.60. Imagine the price jump to electricity consumers if the price of natural gas goes above $8.00 like it did a few years ago.

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Master of my Domain • a year ago

Obama is the master of postponing the hard work to subsequent administrations at how long he pushed out KXL which will now become the next president's fight.
Yeah, he really pushed health care out there didn't he? Of course you'll fault him for pushing that one too hard.

On health care, he was fearless. On environmental issues, he walked a fine line and played passive aggressive.

I have no problem with picking a side, I have a problem with pretending to pick both.

Or he might be simply choosing different methodologies for completely different problems. After all AGW is more of a concern that cannot be resolved in a single term of office. That sound a lot more likely?

You really think a US President plays "passive aggressive"?

KXL was stopped because of Harper impedance to act professionally and with respect. When Mulcair or another becomes PM Obama will sign off for KXL to proceed.

So the USA produces about 17.33% of global CO2 emissions (Wikipedia - and Canada is 1.59%), and coal is 24.5% of that. Therefore a 30% reduction X 24.5% X 17.33% = 1.27% worldwide CO2 reduction.

Even if you believe in AGW, don't expect this sacrifice by the Americans to make any measurable difference in the climate!

I'm not surprised if the US could go this alone. But someone has to lead, and it should be those countries that have reaped the fortunes from burning the oil to date. Then the US could strongly urge other super-powers to join them. After all the US likes to lead/police the world.

Don't fret - the US will have Europe, Canada, Japan joining them.

Cash0, my point was that if the AGW theory is correct, then reductions, even if all other major developed nations come on board, will be too small to matter. They will also likely be more than outweighed by the increases from developing nations. If it was up to me, I'd put all resources towards adjustments to live with climate effects, since the money wasted on things like clean energy is just feel good arm flailing. It's possible you're right. If things do get bad, countries may start burning oil to make themselves safe.

You statement is garbage. Your numbers are wrong. Go away.
I disagree.

I was hopeful when I read the headline saying they are going to cut power plant pollution. It is too bad they are not cutting real particulate pollution, just carbon emissions. It is the particulates that are killing people. Obama misses the mark again.

It does both my friend. In your haste to take a shot at Obama you missed the mark.

Nowhere does it say it does both. Everywhere it is all about greenhouse gas, carbon, carbon dioxide. How many Americans have to continue to die every year due to respiratory problems caused by air pollution?

gameguy49. Nonsense. The measures introduced are the first ever to curb carbon pollution from power plants in the US. These regulations will make solar power and wind power more attractive and bring on stream in the US in 2013 was renewable. This is already happening partly because, in some parts of the US, new solar power and wind power are cheaper than new thermal generation - environmental costs are neglected. Most new electrical power brought on stream in the US in 2013 was renewable. So far in 2014 this trend continues and has, in fact, become even more pronounced. Making negative comments about Obama accomplishes nothing. A few folks in Ottawa have already proved that.

His track record is awesome.

I was stating the obvious. Greenhouse and particulate pollution go hand in hand in coal burning.

Not true. The Ontario, Canada government scrapped their planned reno of their coal fired power plants because the scrubbers would take out the pollution but not the CO2.

Please try and be articulate. Obama has done what no other before him has taken on. He has an excellent record when compared to Republican Presidents.

your last post to me was removed for it’s radical right wing
The hypocrisy of the USA here (Obama) is amazing, as is Canada and other nations. We pretend to do something to protect the environment, but in actuality we don’t. What we do is export our problems to less developed countries such as China and India that have few, if any, environmental or labor regulations, and what have aren’t enforced. Build it there and import it here. We get the products, the environmental destruction and we get cheap goods. After all there's nothing into the products that represent pollution controls and fair labor practices maintain in our home countries. If the American and Canadian governments cared, they would not allow for the importation of goods that were not made to at least the minimum standard we maintain in our home countries. What that can happen? We start manufacturing it at home again! Yes we’ll pay a little more, but we have to stop thinking that we can suck and blow at the same time and maintain some integrity and credibility on the world front.

SO for years now we have been hearing from the tar sands enthusiasts that has all these coal plants that are creating way more emissions than Canada. Obama takes the bull by the horns and begins a program of phasing out coal, of course, the tar sands Wieners have to try to trash Obama because? Because they are stupid neanderthal ideologues.

The 168 billion that has been spent on developing the tar sands is going to be the biggest business loss in recorded history.

Ahh but power plants do not burn oil sands oil. Cars do and we do not see much of a reduction in automobile use so I expect demand from the oil sands to continue.