Debate continues in Wisconsin over Obama's Clean Power Plan

By: Zach Nugent

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The debate over proposed EPA regulations continues. The president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers was in Madison on Monday. He talked about how emission regulations could cripple Wisconsin, but not all agree.

"We would reduce the number of asthma attacks in our children by 90,000," explains Keith Reopelle, Policy Director for Clean Wisconsin.

Reopelle says President Obama's Clean Power Plan, which looks to cut nationwide carbon emissions by 32 percent by 2030, would have positive health and environmental impacts on Wisconsin. But some wonder at what cost.

"I want all of my children to have clean air and clean water, but we can't do it if we destroy the economy," says Jay Timmons, President and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The plan has not been met with open arms by groups like Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce and its national counterpart, the National Association of Manufacturers. NAM estimates a $28 billion gross state product loss in Wisconsin from 2017 to 2040, with the loss of more than 23,000 jobs per year.

Timmons explains, "This regulation taken alone, would be the most expensive in the history of our country. And that means lost jobs."

Jobs, Timmons says, could potentially head overseas.

Timmons says, "Every other country in the world wants to take away what we have and the way they do that is by lowering their taxes, making sure that their environmental regulations are balanced and common-sense and transparent, unlike ours are in this country right now."

Clean Wisconsin disputes this, saying Wisconsin's economy could actually benefit.

Reopelle says, "These carbon pollution limits would absolutely help us to shift away from dirty coal to cleaner alternatives such as wind power and solar power. And it just happens that we have over 500 businesses in the state of Wisconsin that build component parts for wind turbines and solar panels."

Under Obama's plan, each state has the ability to form its own plan to curb emissions. States
must submit their plans by September 2016.

NAM has begun running TV ads across Wisconsin, opposing the new regulations. The group is working with lawmakers to freeze current standards until 85 percent of counties in the U.S. are in compliance with the current standards.

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