President Obama took on big oil in last night’s State of the Union, emphasizing the US’ transition to clean energy.

“Rather than subsidize the past,” he said, “we should invest in the future — especially in communities that rely on fossil fuels. That’s why I’m going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet.”

Not surprisingly, his comment drew praise from environmentalists and clean energy interests and criticism from fossil fuel and other industry groups.

The American Petroleum Institute president and CEO Jack Gerard warned new regulations could raise costs for consumers.

“The majority of new oil and natural gas production that has done so much to grow our economy and save consumers money has occurred primarily on private and state lands,” Gerard said. “On federal lands controlled by the administration, crude oil production has remained flat and natural gas production has declined. Furthermore, the administration has advanced nearly 100 regulations impacting all aspects of the oil and natural gas industry over the past year, which hinders production. Instead of bombarding our economy with duplicative, job-crushing new regulations, President Obama should embrace policies that recognize America’s energy resurgence, including environmental improvements.”

The National Association of Manufacturers president and CEO Jay Timmons also cautioned about new environmental regulations, which he said will hurt manufacturers.

“Instead of imposing new rules on business, including environmental regulations, providing regulatory relief could unleash billions of dollars of investment in the US economy,” Timmons said. “Pursuing a comprehensive energy strategy that addresses current market realities would allow us to harness growth opportunities.”

On the other side of the isle, Tom Sanzillo, director of finances for the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, said President Obama’s coal-lease reform “does for the coal industry what it cannot do for itself — discipline production, shrink supply and better manage the nation’s energy security and this vital...
Center for Climate and Energy Solutions president Bob Perciasepe said the next steps in transitioning to a clean energy future is to implement the Clean Power Plan and flesh out the details of the Paris climate agreement. “On both fronts, strong leadership from business will be critical,” Perciasepe said.

In his final State of the Union address, Obama also took a parting shot at climate deniers. “Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it,” Obama said. “You’ll be pretty lonely, because you’ll be debating our military, most of America’s business leaders, the majority of the American people, almost the entire scientific community, and 200 nations around the world who agree it’s a problem and intend to solve it,” he said, referencing the Paris climate deal.

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