

House backs bill to block EPA power plant rule

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In this Feb. 28, 2014, file photo, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy discusses proposed regulations with coal industry leaders at Dakota Gasification Synfuels Plant in Beulah, N.D. In a long-expected skirmish, House Republicans are moving to block President Barack Obama's plan to limit carbon pollution from new power plants. McCarthy and other officials have said the proposed rule _ the first of two major regulations aimed at limiting carbon pollution from power plants _ is based on carbon reduction methods that are "technically feasible" and under development in at least four sites. (AP Photo/Kevin Cederstrom, file)

The Republican-controlled House has moved to block the president's plan to limit carbon pollution from new power plants.

It's an election-year strike at the White House. The House approved a bill Thursday targeting the power plant rule, as Republicans fight back against what they call the Obama administration's "war on coal."

President Barack Obama's proposal is a key part of his plan to fight climate change. It would set the first national limits on heat-trapping pollution from future power plants.

The House bill was approved 229-183. It would require the Environmental Protection Agency to set carbon emissions standards based on technology in use for at least a year.

Republicans and some coal-state Democrats say the EPA rule is based on carbon-capturing technology that does not currently exist.

The White House has threatened a veto.

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In a long-expected, election-year skirmish, House Republicans are moving to block President Barack Obama's plan to limit carbon pollution from new power plants.

Lawmakers were set to approve a bill targeting the power plant rule Thursday, as Republicans fight back against what they call the Obama administration's "war on coal." Obama's proposal, a key part of his plan to fight climate change, would set the first national limits on heat-trapping pollution from future power plants.

A measure sponsored by Rep. Ed Whitfield of Kentucky, chairman of a House subcommittee on energy and power, would require the Environmental Protection Agency to set carbon emissions standards based on technology that has been in use for at least a year. Republicans and some coal-state Democrats say the EPA rule is based on carbon-capturing technology that does not currently exist.

Whitfield called the power plant proposal "one of the most extreme regulations of the Obama administration," adding that it would "make it impossible to build a new coal-fired power plant in America."

Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., denounced the measure as "a science-denial bill" that would strip the EPA of its ability to block carbon pollution. Waxman and other Democrats said the bill was a blatant attempt to thwart the EPA and cast the Obama administration as a job killer during an election year.

The White House has threatened to veto the measure, saying it would "undermine public health protections of the Clean Air Act and stop U.S. progress in cutting dangerous carbon pollution from power plants." Power plants account for about one-third of U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and other officials have said the proposed rule—the first of two major regulations aimed at limiting carbon pollution from power plants—is based on carbon reduction methods that are "technically feasible" and under development in at least four sites. The rule affecting future plants is a prelude to a more ambitious plan, expected later this year, to control carbon pollution at existing power plants.

In January, McCarthy told the Senate Environment Committee: "We looked at the data available. We looked at the technologies. We made a

determination that (carbon capture and storage technology) was the best system for emission reductions for coal facilities moving forward, because it was technically feasible and it would lead to significant emission reductions."

Whitfield and other critics dispute that, saying carbon capture technology is years away from being commercially viable.

The EPA rule would "mandate (emission) control technologies for power plants that are not yet commercially available, effectively banning new coal-fired [power](#) plants ... and setting a dangerous precedent that could cascade to other fuels," the National Association of Manufacturers said in a letter supporting Whitfield's bill.

But environmental groups said the bill would gut the EPA's authority to reduce carbon pollution.

"The bill sets up impossible tests for any EPA standard reducing [carbon pollution](#) to meet and allows utilities to decide what regulations will be for new [power plants](#)—effectively delaying the best emissions reductions technology for years or even decades," the League of Conservation Voters said in a letter urging lawmakers to oppose the bill.

The Republican-controlled House is likely to approve the Whitfield bill, but the fate of a companion measure sponsored by Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., is less certain.

Manchin said his bill would ensure that pollution standards imposed by the EPA are realistic, calling the current proposal "unattainable under today's technology."

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