U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up

Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Friday, February 15, 2013

Table of Contents

Blog Round-up
April 6, 2010

PEOPLE ARE TALKING 2
ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS 4
CLIMATE CHANGE 4
Cuccinelli's Climate Denier Lawsuits Could Junk Auto Industry Recover (*Wonk Room*) 4
Abandoning Congress is not a winning strategy for climate activists (*Grist)* 6
ENERGY 8
'Total Energy' Makeover Continues – How's Your Energy (*Huffington Post*) 8
Obama on Energy: Two Steps Forward, One Big Step Back (*Huffington Post*) 10
MINING 11
Reclaiming Our Hope (*Huffington Post*) 12
RECYCLING 14
Morning Bell: Red Tape Rising (*Heritage*) 14

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

==========

With the internet, blogs, Twitter, forums - people are talking about EPA 24/7
Here's a sampling of what was said on April 5, 2010:

NOTE: To read the entire blog entry, click on underlined URL. To learn more about the blogger, click on the name/link in first line. Notes and headings are from OPA.

Lisa Jackson

@lisapjackson Does the CWA allow the EPA to issue a permit for #coal exploration, then withdraw it for no reason?
Posted by: ierenergy 3:40 pm Full post: http://ow.ly/1uFI7
(Note: Institute for Energy Research)

Thank you! RT @lisapjackson: Announced more guidance on mountaintop mining standards to protect Appalachian waters:
Posted by: ttennheat: 1:40 pm Full post: http://budurl.com/wxg2

GHG Regulation & Climate Change

HuffPost: Brendan DeMelle: Ads ask Limbaugh/Beck audience: What would Reagan do about climate change?: ...
Posted by: Freedomman11: 7:20 pm Full post: http://huff.to/cST9ZG
(Note: Radio ads airing in New Hampshire during the Limbaugh and Beck shows ask the question "What would Reagan do" about climate change? . The new ad campaign launched by Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP) seeks to remind conservatives that stewardship, including action to address climate change, is consistent with true conservative values.
The ads feature a Reagan quote: "If we've learned any lessons during the past few decades, perhaps the most important is that preservation of our environment is not a partisan challenge; it's common sense. Our physical health, our social happiness, and our economic well-being will be sustained only by all of us working in partnership as thoughtful, effective stewards of our natural resources." - Ronald Reagan, July 11, 1984)

DC Progressive (blog): California Climate Change Initiative Under Attack - Boston Globe California Climate Change I...
Posted by: California_Club 7:10 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/aWvjOT
(Note: Why are a number of Texas-based oil companies pouring money into a nascent ballot initiative in California? Becasue they don't want to clean up their act. ...)

McKibben said "social media" was an integral component to 350's campaign to recruit young activists for issues of climate change
Posted by: TuftsLive: 7:05 pm Full post:

Tell Rupert Murdoch to Get His Facts Straight on Climate Change:
Posted by: jburak1101 7:00 pm Full post:
http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/873247096

Industry Groups Challenge EPAs Reconsideration of "Johnson Memo": Jackson said EPA plans to begin regulating som...
Posted by: diyana1104: 6:30 pm Full post: http://nyti.ms/c5PMF7

Mountain Top Removal Mining Announcement

Famous NYC performance artist @RevBillyTalen arrested yesterday for putting "hex" on 2 branches of Chase bank.
Posted by: ran: 3:50 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/btDXmX
(Note: The self-ordained Rev. Billy Talen was arrested on Easter Sunday after putting a "holy hex" on JPMorgan Chase bank, which he calls the nation's largest financier of coal-mining mountaintop removal.)

EPA and DOT Enact New Auto Fuel Efficiency Standards

EPA Limits Role Electric Cars Will Play in Automakers' Emissions Averages
Posted by: V8Driving: 6:30 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/dabHd5
(Note: Since they produce no emissions and consume no fuel, electric vehicles could dramatically skew CAFE and emission averages. To prevent companies from building swarms of EVs and neglecting to improve other vehicles, the EPA ruled that through 2016, only 200,000 EVs could be incorporated into averages as "zero-emission" vehicles.

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Cuccinelli's Climate Denier Lawsuits Could Junk Auto Industry Recover (*Wonk Room*)

Virginia's radical attorney general, Ken Cuccinelli (R-VA), is threatening the recovery of the American auto industry with new climate denial lawsuits. To the applause of automakers, Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Transportation finalized landmark new fuel economy standards last week, completing President Obama's campaign promise. Cuccinelli has already filed a lawsuit challenging the Environmental Protection Agency's finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger the public, claiming that hacked "Climategate" emails prove a conspiracy by scientists involved with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to replace real science with "political science." In response to the new fuel economy standards — the first rules to take into account greenhouse pollution — Cuccinelli is filing yet another lawsuit, according to spokesman Brian Gottstein:

In that motion, the attorney general's office asked the EPA to reopen its proceedings in light of the recent evidence that the reports the EPA was relying on for its decision contained erroneous and/or unverifiable global temperature and other data. **We will file a notice of appeal with respect to today's ruling**.

Cuccinelli's suit against the science of global warming is baseless, as numerous Virginia climatologists have told the Wonk Room. Furthermore, the auto industry stands fully behind this new program," as Dave McCurdy, President and CEO of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers has written.

Killing the endangerment finding — as numerous state legislatures, attorneys general, and lawmakers in Congress are trying to do — would destroy the stakeholders' fuel economy agreement. The United Auto Workers describe that "California and other states have agreed to forgo state-level regulation of tailpipe emissions and abide by the new national standard that will be created by these NHTSA and EPA rules." If the denier Dirty Air Act efforts go through, UAW explains the "critically important progress" will be "overturned":

However, the critically important progress that was achieved with this historic agreement will be undermined if EPA's endangerment finding is overturned. **Without this finding, EPA will not be able to proceed with its current rulemaking on light duty vehicles**. If the joint rulemaking process collapses, NHTSA has indicated that it will not be able to meet the statutory timetable for implementing any fuel economy increases for the 2012 model year. And in the absence of the EPA standard, California and other states would certainly move forward with their standards, thereby subjecting auto manufacturers to all of the burdens that the one national standard was designed to avoid.

The fears of UAW that multi-state standards would be catastrophic are a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even though the American auto industry can certainly handle multi-state standards, a return to the Bush era of recrimination and lawsuit instead of a focus on competitiveness and innovation would be crippling. Cuccinelli is not only wasting taxpayer money trying to overturn EPA's scientific finding, he's trying to dismantle the historic agreement that all stakeholders agree will create American jobs and increase national competitiveness.

Posted: April 5, 2010 04:41 PM

Climate and Energy Policy and Politics and the Mid term Elections (Huffington Post)

While a great deal of attention has been focused on Congress, the real action in U.S. climate policy over the past two years has been at the state and local level and in the U.S. EPA. Municipalities like New York City have moved to reduce greenhouse gasses emissions with more energy efficient building codes and programs like Mayor Bloomberg's plan to plant one million trees. Meanwhile EPA's tortoise-like regulatory process has been making slow and steady progress to set a regulatory cap on greenhouse gas emissions. Since the U.S. Supreme Court's 2007 ruling that greenhouse gasses could be regulated as an air pollutant under the Clean Air Act, EPA has been moving to collect information on emissions and then put in place a set of rules that would gradually kick in over the next decade.

Meanwhile, the fellahs in the Senate, Senators John Kerry (D-Mass.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) are putting together an energy and climate bill that would strip EPA of some of its authority to regulate greenhouse gasses under the Clean Air Act and prohibit state and regional cap and trade programs. Now that the health bill is finally off the agenda, the climate and energy dance begins in earnest.

There are a number of political facts that will guide this process between now and the mid term elections in November. First, President Obama will be focusing on jobs and the economy between now and November, so climate and energy will only gain traction as part of an economic initiative to create jobs. Second, a Senate bill that is substantially weaker than Waxman-Markey will not survive a conference and could be opposed explicitly or implicitly by the White House with the argument that EPA's regulatory cap is a stronger environmental law.

Clearly the move against EPA in the Senate is a political strategy to appease anti-regulatory forces in the Congress and the business community. A new national standard limiting greenhouse gases could be established without removing old authorities in the Clean Air Act. A Senate bill could easily add to EPA's regulatory authority and encourage them to shift their administrative initiative from the Clean Air Act to a new and better crafted piece of legislation. The choice could be left to EPA. In fact, due to the need for certainty and the possibility of legal challenges to a new bill, EPA and the Administration should retain the right to use the Clean Air Act to limit

greenhouse gasses. Limiting EPA's authority is not necessary and creates a symbolic debate that Kerry and his colleagues will lose.

A comprehensive approach to climate policy is needed and should include efforts to address the energy crisis, However, a plausible case can be made that the U.S. is putting in place a workable, if imperfect greenhouse gas regulatory program. It is unlikely at this point that President Obama will expend massive amounts of political capital to get a climate bill out of Congress. If a reasonable one emerges, he probably will support and sign it, but a controversial bill limiting EPA and state authority is not going to get anywhere. Health care became a must-win battle for the President. Climate policy will not develop in the same way.

The energy issue may very well get separated from the climate issue, by the argument that EPA is handling climate. If this happens, a bill that provides capital for energy efficiency retrofits and infrastructure, pays for energy research and development, and creates jobs in a massive effort to create a green energy economy could get somewhere. I work at a university, so to some degree I should be seen as a lobbyist for research funds. Special pleading aside, I really think that in addition to moving energy technology off of the shelf into more rapid use, we need to focus resources and attention on energy research. Research should focus on solar cells and batteries, smart grids, carbon capture and storage, non-fission nuclear, wind and geothermal technologies. We need to unleash our brainpower on all possible solutions to the transition to the post-fossil fuel energy economy. Just as defense and interstate highways steered economic development in the U.S. after World War II, investment in the energy future can make our economy more efficient, secure and prosperous in the 21st century.

Investment in the research and development of improved energy will pay off. One of the problems with the federal budget is the absence of a capital budget. It is difficult to separate deficits that come from overspending on annual expenses from borrowing for capital facilities and investments that result in wealth creation or long term benefits. There is a long tradition in America of public investment in infrastructure. Government has always invested in roads, trains, ports and power. An important part of that tradition is a division of labor and funding with private partners. The Defense department invented internet, but at a crucial point in its development, the department made an effort to commercialize the web through the private sector. We need to develop a sophisticated national strategy of research, development and commercialization of the energy technologies I mentioned earlier. In the midst of all of this posturing and symbolic energy and climate politics, it would be great if somebody in Washington could focus on the serious business of creating a real energy policy for the 21st century. Perhaps we could do it next winter in the 90 days between the mid term election and the start of the 2012 Presidential campaign.

Follow Steven Cohen on Twitter: **www.twitter.com/earthinstitute**

Abandoning Congress is not a winning strategy for climate activists (*Grist)*

Cross-posted from the Wonk Room.

Senators drafting comprehensive climate and clean energy legislation are negotiating with polluters, and talking about combining a cap on carbon with public incentives for nuclear plants, "clean coal," and offshore drilling. Should supporters of strong, progressive action to solve the climate crisis give up on Congress and work within the existing legal framework of the Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, and other environmental legislation?

We would then rely entirely on the Environmental Protection Agency's existing authority to set rules for greenhouse gas pollution. However, the EPA is subject to the same outside political pressures as lawmakers, who control the EPA's purse-strings. Single members of Congress or single committee chairmen can interfere quite effectively with agency activities if they put their mind to it.

In addition, polluters have all kinds of legal tools they can -- and already are starting to -- use to tie up, slow down and otherwise impede the implementation of EPA rules. Without a Congressional mandate behind it, the EPA will not have the political power it needs to implement rules with the kind of strength activists want and the science demands. The success of EPA rules absent Congressional action would depend on the politics of whatever administration is in power.

By abandoning legislative reform, climate advocates could instead spend their resources on litigating against sources of global warming pollution. But it also takes a lot of money and time to litigate against a coal plant, and even more to win at it. Even if we could knock out all the new coal plants through litigation, that isn't going to be a workable strategy for dealing with the ones that are already chugging away, not to mention the refineries, chemical plants, and the rest of the industrial sector, or the transportation sector.

If climate legislation reaches President Obama's desk with a robust framework, and gets core elements in place, we will come back to it and keep making it better over time. We couldn't get Congress to get the Clean Air Act right the first time. So the original 1967 law was amended -- in 1970, then again in 1977, then again in 1990. This is why strong -- and rapid -- scientific review provisions are an important element.

It is a travesty that political reality makes it is incredibly difficult to get even a watered-down climate bill even into the ballpark of passage. To change that situation, we need to mobilize grassroots activism to change the political calculus for key states like Arkansas, Missouri, the Dakotas, Indiana, West Virginia, and so on.

At the same time, the federal legislative push shouldn't be the basket where all the eggs are placed either; policymaking at the local, state, and regional levels have always led the federal level, and the traditional Clean Air Act framework is well-designed and understood. New climate legislation should integrate with existing policy through amendment, not blanket preemption.

Anyone who wants to see a stronger bill can help make it happen by putting meaningful pressure on the senators who are sitting on the fence or near it to support strong climate legislation, and being descriptive in naming what you'd like to see legislation do.

That's the only way to reduce the number of unappetizing deals that are going to get made. Telling people that the vehicle that's moving right now is hopeless and worthless makes the sponsors' jobs that much harder -- which means they'll just cut *more* deals in order to get the bill done.

What's critical for activists -- including professional environmentalists -- to remember is that the *goal* of climate activism isn't comprehensive climate legislation, or strong EPA enforcement of the Clean Air Act. Our shared, common goal is a green economy that rewards work, not pollution, and saves the natural gifts of the world without which we all perish.

ENERGY

April 6, 2010

Posted: April 5, 2010 12:59 PM

‘Total Energy’ Makeover Continues – How’s Your Energy (*Huffington Post*)

The energy makeover continues and Marissa comments that her energy improvements occur on so many different levels. Let's take a look.

Meeting with Dr Frank Lipman (author, Revive!) was a critical step in the initial stages of the Total Energy makeover. As with any health program, it is necessary to include evaluation by a healthcare practitioner prior to beginning the program. Thus, although I suspected adrenal fatigue and excessive caffeine intake, as well as minimal timeout to "unplug and recharge," as the primary culprits for Marissa's fatigue and energy spikes throughout the day, we required Dr Lipman to do blood work and a physical exam. What makes Dr Lipman's exam so much more valuable lies in his approach to medicine, an integrative approach. Thus, he explored much more than potential physiologic issues, inquiring about how Marissa invests other energy -- work, family, social. As he described this for an ABC employee in the Green room last week, the employee said, "Isn't this just good medicine." I couldn't agree more. So with his clinical findings (Marissa had very low vitamin D and had signs of adrenal fatigue but no other deficiencies) as well as his psychosocial ones, Lipman prescribed vitamin D supplementation, fish oil, greens, and protein supplementation, weekly acupuncture as well as "go out with your friends more."

Putting it all together.

So now that we had that critical piece, Marissa and I met to discuss her supplement regime -- it's important to know when, how much, and which brands to take when it comes to supplementation. I wanted to make sure that adding these items in wouldn't in any way subtract from Marissa's progress with compliance to her food plan, her yoga practice, and her before bed regime (to "unplug and recharge"). Right now Marissa is on a high dose of vitamin d3 (from Complementrix by Dr Soram Khalsa -- see his Huffington Post on vitamin D deficiency) to replete her levels. Vitamin D is fat-soluble so she is taking it twice daily with meals as well as taking her fish oil (a fat source) at the same time. I recommended Wholeomega by New Chapter for her fish oil as we discussed the benefits of getting her EPA and DHA in the balance supplied naturally (in wild salmon) as well as being an eco-friendly choice as well. She is also taking an organic greens powder -- choosing from either Berry Greens by New Chapter or NanoGreens by BioPharma -- as an energy boost in the morning or mid-afternoon where she would have previously turned to artificial sources. And she often mixes the greens with a protein powder -- Manitoba Harvest Hemp protein 70 now as she wants to eliminate all dairy from her diet (she had been using a whey protein powder).

Marissa continues to balance her nutrients at each eating occasion (carb + protein + healthy fat + unlimited vegetables), aiming for eating occasions every three hours. What changed this month was a desire to move to a vegetarian or even vegan diet. This prompted our spending time to review vegetarian protein and healthy fat sources to make sure she didn't lose anything in the adjustment phase (for more on this see the AKA menu worksheet in the client resources section at www.ashleykoffapproved.com). Marissa still needs quick and easy -- but much to my excitement she also began to cook a bit this month. I explained to her that an "IKEA" approach -- some assembly required -- would be ideal for her as she controls the ingredient quality, limits preservatives used, and can portion control yet without being overwhelmed by the prospect of full cooking daily. So she stocks up on the basics -- and assembles as needed/desired. And lastly, when we discussed becoming a vegan, being a vegetarian, doing a cleanse (this was of interest at month's start), I talked with Marissa about my approach or label -- being Qualitarian -- and explained that I created this because I've seen too many patients making lesser quality choices when they eliminate foods from their diet. For example, eating lots of processed vegetarian foods or those that exchange fat or carbohydrate food sources for processed replacements to achieve "net-zero" status. And as for the cleanse, switching to whole foods, removing extra sugar, removing artificial energy sources, eliminating dairy -- Marissa, you are cleansing and you didn't even know it!

Check in with Tara Stiles and Marissa's posts to see how her yoga continues to be a core (pun intended) part of her energy makeover.

Looking ahead, now that the physical pieces are in place and even starting to become habit, we have the right foundation to work on Marissa's energy on different levels. She's meeting with several Huffington Post experts, so stay tuned to see how her energy improvements take shape.

April 6, 2010

Obama on Energy: Two Steps Forward, One Big Step Back (*Huffington Post*)

During a week of highs and lows, President Obama sent us mixed signals on his commitment to true clean energy solutions in the U.S.

Here's a recap of President Obama's game of energy hopscotch last week: the significant steps forward with a national greenhouse gas reduction standard for vehicles and new restrictions on the devastating practice of mountaintop removal, as well as the monumental step back with President Obama's announcement of the largest expansion of offshore oil and natural gas drilling in half a century.

Making Progress

Last Thursday, the Obama administration took historic action towards curbing the nation's global warming footprint by establishing a greenhouse gas reduction standard for motor vehicles that would extend California's 2002 Clean Cars law nationwide.

The new rules require automakers to build cars and light duty trucks that average 35.5 miles per gallon by 2016, thereby reducing global warming pollution by nearly 30 percent, saving an estimated 1.8 billion barrels of oil, and resulting in healthier air and lower fuel costs.

On the same day, EPA administrator Lisa Jackson announced a major new decision to crack down on Clean Water Act violations from mountaintop removal coal mining. This occurred less than two weeks after activists dangled from 20-foot tripods on the lawn of the EPA's D.C. headquarters, releasing a 25-foot banner calling for an end to mountaintop removal.

Mountaintop removal is a destructive practice that involves clear cutting forests, blowing the tops off of mountains to access the coal below, and then dumping the debris into valleys and streambeds. In the process, mountaintop removal poisons essential drinking water, pollutes the air, and costs potential jobs in other industries while the number of coal miners continues to shrink (the number of miners in West Virginia has declined from more than 60,000 to just 22,000 since 1979).

Jackson cited new EPA studies concluding that dumping coal mining waste into valleys and waterways has permanently destroyed ecosystems in Appalachia with toxicity levels up to 50 percent beyond what guidelines permit.

Let's hope this decision is the beginning of the end for the nightmare of mountaintop removal.

For these steps forward in the fight against climate chaos and environmental injustice, the Obama administration is to be lauded.

A Big Backward Step

However, President Obama's disappointing announcement last Wednesday that he plans to open large expanses of America's coastline to offshore drilling eliminates the momentum that could have been create with the transportation and mining advances.

President Obama proposes to lift a decades-old moratorium on offshore oil drilling in the U.S., permitting drilling in vast swaths of territory along the eastern seaboard, the Gulf Coast, and within the Arctic Ocean, all in the name of currying political favor for the passage of a climate bill.

This plan is, simply put, running on empty.

Beyond poor politics, opening 167 million acres of pristine ocean to drilling is poor policy. Expanded drilling threatens our coastal communities while perpetuating our dependence on dirty fossil fuels.

Drilling pads the greasy pockets of Big Oil while doing virtually nothing to make gas more affordable for Americans at the pump. President Obama's plan fails to hold Big Oil accountable on royalty reform. Because of this, the plan will leave taxpayers shortchanged by billions of dollars.

You don't need me to tell you this plan doesn't make sense. Listen to Obama himself. In June 2008, candidate Obama told a crowd of coast-dwellers in Jacksonville, FL that offshore drilling "would only worsen our addiction to oil and put off investments in clean, renewable energy."

The United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil, but has only three percent of the world's reserves. There likely won't be any oil from these new offshore areas until 2017, and full production won't ramp up until 2030.

Meanwhile, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that onshore U.S. wind resources could generate nearly 37 million gigawatt-hours (GWh) of clean energy every year, more than nine times the amount of energy Americans consume each year. Investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency have the potential to create 14.5 million more jobs by 2050 than continued reliance on fossil fuels, cutting our dependence on fossil fuels and our global warming pollution.

We've seen a reversal like this before. We can't stake our future or our economy on antiquated energy. Now, more than ever, President Obama should heed the advice of candidate Obama. Let's stop fooling around with gimmicks and invest in the truly clean energy our country needs.

MINING

Reclaiming Our Hope (*Huffington Post*)

How do we counter political demoralization among those who had such high hopes for the American political process just over a year ago? It helped to finally pass the healthcare reform bill--Democratic Party donations have surged since the vote. But we're still facing dashed hopes (including those due to the bill's more mixed aspects); exhaustion from eight years of Bush; the dispiriting legacy of the Massachusetts, New Jersey and Virginia elections; and the disastrous Supreme Court campaign finance decision. Even before all these last, too many long-time activists spent much of the past year withdrawing from the fray. Too many newer ones quit before they barely began. We need to reverse this process of withdrawal.

The 1994 midterm elections offer a cautionary tale. Long-time activist friends seemed strangely detached, so disgusted with the Party-driven political sphere--particularly after the passage of NAFTA--that they wanted nothing to do with it. Other labor, environmental, and social justice activists responded similarly. Instead of volunteering, as they'd done to elect Bill Clinton, they watched as disgruntled spectators while the Gingrich Republicans prevailed. According to national surveys, the 45 percent of registered voters who stayed home would have reversed the electoral outcome had they only gone to the polls. But no one reached out to them directly, just as far too few approached their counterparts after recent Democratic defeats.

If we want to prevent a similar dynamic from happening this fall, we might remember how demoralization and withdrawal create self-reinforcing cycles. We decide that little we do will matter, so withdraw our energy, time and money. Though we may still sign the occasional online petition, we stop reaching out to the unconverted, stop rallying publicly to voice our stands, detach ourselves from situations in which we actually engage our fellow citizens. No wonder we then feel helpless.
Face-to-face community can be an antidote. If we just hunker down behind our computers, reading the daily bad news, it's easy to feel isolated. When we work directly with others, even if the challenges are great, we're supported by their imagination and energy, their living, breathing presence, the possibilities of common action. We can start to create this sense of a community in pursuit of a common goal online, but once we meet offline, our connections become far stronger. Even successful virtual activism often builds on more personal connections. In 2006, 100,000 MoveOn volunteers called voters in key swing states. Follow-ups suggested these efforts made a significant difference, but only three percent of the organization's three million members participated. Two years later, MoveOn got a fifth of its list involved through a massive phone bank where members invited other members to participate.

It also helps to find concrete tasks. People feel bleakest when they feel there's nothing they can do, but that's never actually the case. Even in when imprisoned in Robben Island, Nelson Mandela and his compatriots retrieved forbidden letters and notes wrapped in plastic at the bottom of their food drums. They then copied the inspiring stories on scraps of toilet paper and taped them inside the rim of their toilet bowls. Republican obstructionism and Democratic compromises may be infuriating, but they hardly equal living under a dictatorship. If we can reach out to the now more dispirited legions who carried Obama to victory and give them ways to act between now and November, we have a chance to shift America's political dynamics, and build on the victories we've begin to win: covering 30 million people with health care, making

college far more affordable, a recent EPA ruling that may well put an end to the coal companies' hideously destructive mountain top removal. But further progress won't happen by simply lamenting the bad news, wishing Congress had passed something better, or being satisfied with what we've gained so far.

The more we can cross expected political boundaries, the stronger the impact of our actions. In the spring of 2006, net neutrality--the principle that all Internet traffic should be treated equally--seemed doomed. The House passed a bill that would have effectively ended it. The Senate was expected to follow suit. Then the cofounder of MoveOn met the Christian Coalition's communications director at a retreat aimed at bridging political lines. They became friends, then joined to help save net neutrality with a joint New York Times ad and joint press conference at which they presented over a million signatures in support of net neutrality. They played a critical role in keeping the Internet as a commons open to all. We might build similarly unexpected coalitions with some of the more populist elements of the Tea Party movement, particularly around curtailing Wall Street.

We can take heart from remembering that when we do get people involved, or keep them involved, we never know where they'll end up. Nobel Peace prize winner Wangari Maathai recalled the pivotal role of social justice conversations at the small Catholic college she attended in Kansas, and how they helped set her on her path. Similarly, while canvassing a white working class Chicago neighborhood, a friend of mine once knocked on the door of a local woman who complained how a nearby body shop was always blocking the alley with junked-up cars. He helped get her to take her first stand, and she went on to become one of the city's most influential neighborhood voices. Who knows what the young (and not so young) Obama activists might go on to accomplish, if we just can get them reengaged.

We need to avoid the trap of purism. It may leave us feeling righteous, but it ducks the key question: how to create change within our actual historical context while working to shift the horizon of what's deemed politically possible. Think of how Kennedy and Johnson worked to put brakes on the civil rights movement for fear of shattering the Democratic coalition, with LBJ twisting the arms of Martin Luther King and Walter Reuther to oppose seating the integrated Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation at the 1964 Atlantic City Convention. Only after the movement continued to push did Johnson muster all his political capital and skill to help to pass the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts--a model on how we might continue to push to build on the partial changes we've won. The activists who created this shift didn't demonize Johnson. They just continued to speak out for their most compelling vision of justice, until America's political culture shifted and Johnson took the risk of embracing their cause. We need to create equivalent public pressure in our time, and dismissing Obama as The Great Betrayer doesn't help.

Finally, it helps to recognize the unpredictability of our common future. There's no inevitable historical pendulum, but when people take the risks needed to create what Mandela has called "the multiplication of courage," we never know what new possibilities will open up. Not all moments of promise are realized, but we'd do well to view the future as at least partly contingent on our actions, as it has been so often in the past.

It's been a frustrating time since November 2008, but our challenge is to spend less time bemoaning our disappointments and more energy engaging with ordinary citizens the way so many of us did a year and a half ago. If we give people enough ways to act on our present crises, we never know how history might turn.

This was originally posted on TheNation.com

Paul Rogat Loeb is the author of Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times, whose wholly updated new edition will be released March 30, of The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear, named the #3 political book of 2004 by the History Channel and the American Book Association, and of Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus. See www.paulloeb.org To receive his articles directly email sympa@lists.groundwire.org with the subject line: subscribe paulloeb-articles.

RECYCLING

Posted: April 6, 2010 12:07 AM

Morning Bell: Red Tape Rising (*Heritage*)

Posted By Conn Carroll On April 5, 2010 @ 9:40 am In Enterprise and Free Markets | 28 Comments

Just three days after President Barack Obama's health plan was signed into law, AT&T announced [1] that due to an obscure tax change in the bill, the nation's largest telephone company would take a $1 billion hit to its bottom line this quarter. According to health benefits analysts [2] this tax law modification would shave as much as $14 billion from U.S. corporate profits. While it would have been better had these tax losses been made more public before Congress voted, at least these tax charges are transparent and easily quantifiable enough to get noticed by the American people. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the hundreds of new regulations that the federal government will enforce as it tries to implement Obama's redistributionist health agenda [3].

In addition to the federal government's explicit taxes and spending, Americans are also burdened with a slew of hidden taxes imposed by an ever-increasing number of regulations. More than 50 agencies have a hand in federal regulatory policy, enforcing more than 150,000 pages of rules. Many of these regulations provide needed benefits. Most Americans would agree on the need for security regulations to protect citizens from terrorist attacks, although the extent and scope of those rules may be subject to debate. But each regulation comes at a cost–a "regulatory tax" imposed on all Americans. According to a 2005 study [4] commissioned by the Small Business Administration, the cost of all regulations then on the books was some $1.1 trillion per year.

Worse than the existing size of our country's regulatory burden, is the pace at which it has been growing. Contrary to what most liberals and media elites would have you believe, President George Bush had a decidedly mixed record on regulation. While he should be praised for strengthening the role of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in screening new regulations, by every

objectively measurable metric the size and scope of the regulatory state grew significantly under his tenure [5]. And President Bush's last years in office were his worst. In 2008 36 major regulations were enacted by the Bush administration, and in 2009 some $15 billion [6] in new regulatory costs were imposed on the American people.

President Bush doesn't deserve all the blame for that $15 billion in new costs for 2009. About $4.4 billion is attributable to regulations approved by the Obama administration. While that may seem like a significant decrease, it is actually an ominous sign when put in context. Regulatory activity always increases near the end of a presidency and is slower at the beginning. So in President Bush's first year, he enacted only one major rule and he was in his third year in office before the new regulatory costs he inflicted on the American people hit President Obama's one-year $4 billion mark [6]. And that $4 billion does not yet include all the regulations for Obamacare. Or all of the regulations Obama's EPA wants to pass under the Clean Air Act. Or any of the new financial regulations that Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) and Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT) want to inflict on the American people.

There are some things Congress can do now to help better manage the onslaught of federal regulations. First the authority and scope of OIRA should be protected. Establishing a sunset date for all new regulations would also help. But ultimately things will not change for the better until policymakers exercise the will and resolve to guard against the deluge. As Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) asked [7] last week: "If Congress can't control what a few mortgage finance bureaucrats do with your dollars, why would anyone trust Congress to control what tens of thousands of bureaucrats will do with your health? … Should unchecked centralized government be allowed to grow and grow in power … or should its powers be limited and returned to the people?"

Quick Hits:

- According to economists, our nation's 9.7% unemployment rate is likely to be driven higher [8] as more people look for work as the economy finally recovers.
- After spending $700 billion bailing out Wall Street, the Obama administration plans to start a $21 million [9] pilot program to help small businesses.
- After one week of the White House campaign to sell Obamacare, support for the bill has decreased in the CBS News poll [10] from 48% – 37% against to 53% – 32% against.
- Speaking about the Obama administration's signature education policy initiative, Race to the Top, Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter (D) said: "It was like the Olympic Games, and we were an American skater with a Soviet judge from the 1980s."
- According to a new Gallup poll [11] of self-proclaimed Tea Party supporters, the age, educational background, employment status, and race of the Tea Party movement is "quite representative of the public at large."