U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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With the internet, blogs, Twitter, forums - people are talking about EPA 24/7
Here's a sampling of what was said on Feb. 18, 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

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson ties environmentalism to minority concerns.
TheRoot 6:30 pm Full post: http://digs.by/1S1v
(Note: Jackson visited Mississippi, the first stop on a tour with Congressional Black Caucus, of sites across the country promoting the message of health, non-pollution, economic opportunity and environmental justice. Closest to her heart is awareness—"putting this agency in the minds of the American people, and not just those who consider themselves environmentalists." Author Dayo Olopade is a writer for The Root and New America: New Voices, Innovative Ideas, Post-Partisan Policy)

Let EPA Administrator Jackson know we support her efforts 2protect communities from toxic coal ash.
Sierra_Magazine 6:20 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/aK9zso

New Diesel Engine Air Toxic Rules

EPA Sets First Standards for Stationary Diesels
equipment_lease 6:20 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/anbQbZ

EPA is setting the first standards that will reduce emissions of formaldehyde... EPA estimates that more than 900000 of the engines generate ...
Posted by: www.constructionequipment.com 6:10 pm Full post: http://www.constructionequipment.com/article/CA6719809.html

On February 17, 2010, EPA issued a final rule that will further reduce emissions of toxic air ...
Posted by: EnnNews 6:10 pm Full post: http://www.enn.com/pollution/article/41027

EPA sets air limits for stationary diesel engines. Owners of larger units will have to install emission controls
Posted by: frankbrill 6:05 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/bJLhxs

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Regulation & Science

Utah legislators ask EPA to stop regulating carbon dioxide emissions
Posted by: Utah_Newspapers 6:05 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/bkd5HG

Climate.biz: Industry, States, Politicians Unite Against EPA on Climate Change
Posted by: ronnieglass 6:00 pm Full post: http://ff.im/-gaHhq

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Refuting Cuccinelli Denier Petition, Virginia Climate Scientists See 'Great Risk' From Greenhouse Gases (*The Wonk Room*)

By Brad Johnson on Feb 18th, 2010 at 2:03 pm
Ken Cuccinelli
Virginia is claiming that global warming is "unreliable, unverifiable and doctored" science, but the state's climatologists aren't buying it. Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli (R-VA) — a former state senator and corporate attorney — has joined Texas and right-wing industry groups in challenging the Environmental Protection Agency's finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger the public. In a press conference announcing this petition, Cuccinelli claimed 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." His efforts to block "job-destroying regulations based on unverifiable and unrepeatable so-called science" are supported by Gov. Bob McDonnell (R-VA):

It's very clear the process by which this was undertaken was not one that was set up to reach an objective conclusion. This wasn't the pursuit of truth. **It was political science, not science in the typical sense of the word**. . . . While we're open to seeing where honest, unbiased science leads us in the climate policy arena, we are not prepared to stand by while **EPA proceeds to implement job-destroying regulations based on unverifiable and unrepeatable so-called science**.

If there is such a conspiracy, it has corrupted Cuccinelli's own state. In email interviews with the Wonk Room, several scientists at the University of Virginia Department of Environmental Sciences, which runs the Virginia Climatology Office, made it clear that they believe Cuccinelli's extreme claims are without merit.

Palaeoclimatologist William Ruddiman, professor emeritus, University of Virginia — and author of Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate and Earth's Climate: Past and Future — is "confident" of the facts of manmade global warming, and that our emissions of greenhouse gases "carry great risk":

As a mainstream climate scientist, I am confident about the following facts:

—Earth has warmed by 0.7-0.8C since the late 1800's.
—Greenhouse gas concentrations began rising near 1850 and have been rising since then.
—Most of the warming since the middle/late 1800's, and the vast majority of it since 1970, has been caused by greenhouse-gas increases.
—Given this history, and with the current rate of gas emissions, future climate will likely be warmer (**probably much warmer than any climate of the last few tens of millions of years**).

Actions that produce climates greatly different from today carry great risk. And **at this point we are headed in that direction**.

Atmospheric scientist Jennie Moody, research associate professor, University of Virginia, has concluded that "the public welfare is threatened by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions," based on her own research and knowledge of the science:

There is nothing in my own research, or my understanding of the science of climate change that would give me reason to believe that EPA's finding of endangerment is not based on sound science. To rephrase this, I would say that my knowledge gained through regular scholarship (reading of the literature in my field, I have a Ph.D. in atmospheric science (meteorology) and a minor in chemistry) and to a lesser extent from my own research in facts leads me to conclude that **the public welfare is threatened by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions**.

Wildlife biologist Michael Erwin, research professor, University of Virginia, who feels "there is no question" about the link between greenhouse gases and sea level rise, warns of the consequences to the state of Virginia:

The issue of relative sea level rise is a real concern, especially in the mid Atlantic region (from New Jersey to North Carolina, and including Chesapeake Bay) and the Louisiana-Mississippi coast. The combination of eustatic sea level rise and subsidence in both areas is substantial, resulting in inundation of many wetlands, and erosion of many small marsh islands; it appears that most models predict an even more rapid rate of sea level rise in the next century. **This has major implications to the wildlife species that depend on marshes, as well as human infrastructure in these densely populated areas**.

Are they part of the conspiracy? Are they being duped by even-more-clever scientists? Or is the threat of accumulating man-made greenhouse gases real, as scientists have been warning for decades? We report, you decide.

Update The question asked of Professor Moody was:

I would like to know if your research and/or your understanding of the science of climate change gives you any reason to believe that the EPA's assessment that greenhouse gases are threatening public welfare (through such means, with varying degrees of certainty, as adverse impacts in the areas of water resources and sea level rise and coastal areas, increases in wildfires, changes in air quality, increases in temperatures, changes in extreme weather events, increases in food- and water-borne pathogens, changes in aeroallergens) is not based on sound science.

STIMULUS

No-Cost Stimulus Would Spur Business Hiring and Create Jobs (*Heritage Foundation*)

by James Sherk
February 18, 2010
WebMemo #2808

Last year, President Obama pushed through a massive $862 billion jobs bill emphasizing "shovel-ready" projects. Yet the 2009 stimulus did little to promote new private investment; unsurprisingly, it failed to create jobs. This failure was expected because government spending only shifts spending in the economy: It neither increases overall demand nor gives private businesses a reason to invest in new projects.

Congress should jettison ideology and instead promote entrepreneurship and investment with a no-cost stimulus that would create jobs without adding to the deficit. Congress can do this through a combination of explicit actions and by eliminating specific, Washington-based threats to the economy:

- Freezing all proposed tax hikes and costly regulations at least until unemployment falls below 7 percent;
- Freezing spending and rescinding unspent stimulus funds;
- Reforming regulations to reduce unnecessary business costs, such as repealing Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act;
- Reforming the tort system to lower costs and uncertainty facing businesses;
- Removing barriers to domestic energy production;
- Suspending the job-killing Davis-Bacon Act (DBA);
- Passing pending free-trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama; and
- Reducing taxes on companies' foreign earnings if they bring those earnings home.

Congress must recognize that a strong recovery and new hiring depends on the confidence businesses have in the future. Uncertainty is a fact of life for all businesses, but when Washington adds materially to that uncertainty, businesses invest less and hire less. This is especially true following a deep recession, with so many producers still struggling with excess capacity. The most powerful, no-cost strategy Congress can adopt is to stop threatening those in a position to hire--no more taxes, no cap-and-trade legislation, no government takeover of private health care, and no massive increase in the public debt.

No New Taxes

First, Congress should announce it will do no harm. Many items on the congressional agenda would significantly raise business costs. For example, uncertainty surrounds the extension or expiration of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, and new taxes are regularly proposed. Businesses can only guess how much Washington will raise their costs in the near future.

In the face of such a threatening environment, it is not surprising that companies are investing less. Indeed, one in every eight small business owners who say that now is not a good time to expand gives the political climate as their reason.[1]

Congress can remove this job-killing fear overnight. The leaders of both Houses should issue a joint statement announcing that Congress will prevent any tax increases until unemployment falls below 7 percent.

Bring Spending Under Control

Second, Congress should bring federal spending under control. Congress should rescind the unspent stimulus funds and further reduce spending.

Government spending generally hurts the economy. Countries in which the government spends heavily do not have low unemployment rates. In fact, countries with greater government employment have higher unemployment. The same is true for nations whose governments spend more heavily.

Government spending eliminates more jobs than it creates because the resources the government spends do not materialize out of thin air: Government spending consumes resources that would otherwise be available for private consumption and--more importantly for job creation--private investment. Each $1.00 increase in government spending reduces private investment between $0.46

and $0.97 after two years and $0.74 and $0.95 over five years.

Reducing Red Tape

Many government regulations raise business costs while providing little public benefit. If Congress eliminated these regulations, it would reduce costs and encourage business expansion and hiring.

For example, Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act requires publicly traded firms to have an annual external audit of their financial controls. This regulation provides little benefit to shareholders, but it costs a lot: an average 0.5 percent of revenues ($1.5 million a year) for small- to medium-sized companies. Nationally, Section 404 costs the economy $35 billion a year.[2] Eliminating this regulation would reduce business operating costs, raise profits, and spur new investment.

Another example of needless regulation comes from the Environmental Protection Agency, which has started regulating CO2 emissions. If these regulations become law, every business that uses a lot of energy will see its costs skyrocket. These higher costs will in turn reduce investment and jobs. Congress would save jobs, for example, by amending the Clean Air Act to state that carbon dioxide is not a pollutant.

Tort Reform

America spends an extraordinary 1.8 percent of the economy on the direct costs of the tort system. Enterprising lawyers have strong incentives to sue to win multi-million-dollar judgments. As a result, businesses spend heavily on lawyers to defend themselves instead of creating jobs that produce goods and services. Bringing U.S. tort costs in line with the rest of the industrialized world would reduce a major cost and risk to businesses.

The effects of such tort reform on employment could be dramatic. A recent study found that just one element of the U.S. legal system--lawsuits allowed in some states when companies lay off workers--reduces employment by between 0.8 and 1.6 percentage points.

Domestic Energy Development

Federal law and regulations heavily restrict domestic energy production. To encourage production and job creation Congress should:

- Permit environmentally responsible oil and natural gas production in the Alaska National

Wildlife Refuge;

- Open up off-limits areas of the Outer Continental Shelf for oil drilling;
- Require the U.S. Department of the Interior to allow oil shale development;
- Streamline the licensing of nuclear power plants;
- Reform the National Environmental Policy Act's environmental and judicial review process to reduce to 270 days the maximum amount of time it takes to award construction permits on federal lands.

The Heritage Foundation has estimated that increasing domestic oil production by 2 million barrels a day would create 270,000 jobs.[3] Royalties from the production would also lower the deficit.

Suspend the Davis-Bacon Act

Congress should reduce spending, and it can better leverage the funds it spends by suspending an antiquated labor law. The DBA requires federal construction contractors to pay "prevailing wage" rates that average 22 percent above market rates. Under DBA, the government hires four construction workers for the price of five. This will add $11.4 billion to the cost of federal construction in 2010.

Federal policy should not give some workers inflated wages while others remain unemployed. Suspending DBA would allow the government to build more for the same amount of money, employing 160,000 additional workers in the process.

Implement the Free Trade Agreements

Nearly all economists agree that removing trade barriers helps the economy. However, Congress has not ratified free trade agreements pending with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia. The U.S. International Trade Commission has estimated that these trade agreements would increase U.S. GDP by $12.6-$14.4 billion.

The trade pact with Korea alone would be the second largest free trade area for the U.S. (in terms of dollar value) after NAFTA. Ratifying these trade agreements would boost the economy and create jobs.

Repatriating Foreign Profits

Multinational companies earning money in foreign countries must pay U.S. taxes on those earnings if they bring them into the U.S. As a result, many firms leave profits overseas rather than repatriating

them to America.

Congress should allow multinational corporations to bring their earnings to the U.S. without levying prohibitive tax rates. Freed of this distorting tax, those firms would be able to pursue efficiencies otherwise unavailable to them in terms of new investment or reducing debt, or they would pay those earnings out to their shareholders to invest elsewhere in the economy.

Washington Must Be Part of the Solution, Not the Problem.

When it comes to job creation, Washington is currently part of the problem, not the solution. Businesses in a position to hire and expand recognize the threats to their own future and to the overall economy from higher taxes, higher deficits and debt, cap and trade, the hostile takeover of private health care, and growing protectionist sentiments. In light of those threats, the reasonable reaction from businesses more often than not is to stand pat and wait--not expand and hire new employees. Congress could most effectively stimulate the economy by simply vowing to do no harm.

But Washington could be even more helpful. Congress should look to no-cost stimulus legislation that promotes investment and entrepreneurship. Congress should freeze spending at current levels and announce it will not vote on higher taxes or anti-business legislation until unemployment returns to normal levels. Congress should also eliminate costly regulations, reform the tort system, permit more domestic energy production, and suspend the DBA. Congress can further boost the economy by passing pending free trade agreements and permitting multinational businesses to return their foreign profits to the U.S. At no cost to the Treasury, these measures would spur the economy and create jobs.

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