
From: H

RELEASE IN PART B6

Sent: 11/25/2012 3:03:17 AM +00:00

To: Oscar Flores

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Subject: Pls print for me

Climate skeptic group works to reverse renewable energy mandates By Juliet Eilperin, Published: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 6:17 PM

The Heartland Institute, a libertarian think tank skeptical of climate change science, has joined with the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council to write model legislation aimed at reversing state renewable energy mandates across the country.

The Electricity Freedom Act, adopted by the council's board of directors in October, would repeal state standards requiring utilities to get a portion of their electricity from renewable power, calling it "essentially a tax on consumers of electricity." Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have binding renewable standards; in the absence of federal climate legislation, these initiatives have become the subject of intense political battles.

The legislative council, or ALEC, is a conservative-leaning group of state legislators from all 50 states that has sought to roll back climate regulation in the past. It lost some corporate sponsors early this year because of its role promoting "stand your ground" laws that allow the use of force in self-defense without first retreating when faced with a serious threat.

But the involvement of the Heartland Institute, which posted a billboard in May comparing those who believe in global warming to domestic terrorist Theodore J. Kaczynski, shows the breadth of conservatives' efforts to undermine environmental initiatives on the state and federal level. In many cases, the groups involved accept money from oil, gas and coal companies that compete against renewable energy suppliers.

The Heartland Institute received more than \$7.3 million from Exxon Mobil between 1998 and 2010, and nearly \$14.4 million between 1986 and 2010 from foundations affiliated with Charles G. and David H. Koch, whose firm Koch Industries has substantial oil and energy holdings.

James Taylor, the Heartland Institute's senior fellow for environmental policy, said he was able to persuade most of ALEC's state legislators and corporate members to push for a repeal of laws requiring more solar and wind power use on the basis of economics.

"Renewable power mandates are very costly to consumers throughout the 50 states, and we feel it is important that consumers have access to affordable electricity," Taylor said. "We wrote the model legislation and I presented it. I didn't have to give that much of a case for it."

Taylor dismissed the idea that his group pushed for the measure because it has accepted money from fossil-fuel firms: "The people who are saying that are trying to take attention away from the real issue — that alternative energy, renewable energy, is more expensive than conventional energy."

Todd Wynn, who directs ALEC's energy, environment and agriculture task force, said the group decided to take up the issue because some of its members are worried about the mandates' "impacts on their state's economies and their constituents."

"It is not that ALEC is opposed to renewable energy in any way," Wynn said. "But we are opposed to government intervention mandating certain energy sources over others."

But renewable energy officials — including ones from the Solar Energy Industries Association and the American Wind Energy Association, both ALEC members — questioned the new policy. Setting renewable targets is a popular way to diversify a state's energy mix and lock in long-term prices, they said, while alternative energy costs continue to decline.

"ALEC is going to wake up and realize that the Heartland Institute, which is funded by special interests, is pushing them in a direction that's making them irrelevant to, or at best out of touch with, the American public," said SEIA President Rhone Resch. "And they can't afford to do that."

As part of its effort to roll back renewable standards, ALEC is citing economic analyses of state policies co-published by Suffolk University's Beacon Hill Institute and the State Policy Network. Both groups have received donations from foundations funded by the Koch brothers.

The analyses — which examine current or proposed standards in such states as Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina and Oregon — assume that the Energy Information Administration's projected renewable energy price estimates are too low, and that cost-containment measures embedded in state policies will fail. As a result, the reports conclude Kansas's requirement to obtain 20 percent of its electricity will cost consumers \$644 million over the next eight years, while Oregon's goal of 25 percent renewable electricity by 2025 will cost consumers \$992 million by 2025.

Beacon Hill Institute research economist Michael Head said he and his two co-authors were skeptical the cost caps outlined in legislation would kick in.

"We just left it out so we could provide the actual analysis of the policy itself," Head said, adding that the central question is not whether renewable energy costs more but "the matter of degree. You're certainly going to have these higher electricity prices. They will have profound negative consequences for the states' economies."

But Gabe Elsner, co-director of the public watchdog group Checks and Balances Project, said the legislation and economic reports amount to "a one-two punch against clean energy laws across the country" by fossil-fuel interests.

"You push the legislation to state legislators and then you fund reports to support the argument and convince state lawmakers," Elsner said, "and all without any transparency or disclosure about the sources of this funding."

David G. Tuerck, executive director of the Beacon Hill Institute and chair of Suffolk University's economics department, said Koch funding did not determine the report's conclusions about renewable energy.

"Koch certainly has not had the only role in funding these studies," Tuerck said, adding the other donors had asked to remain anonymous.

It remains unclear whether the new drive to repeal state renewable standards will succeed: Similar efforts over the past two years have failed in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon and Washington.

"Renewable standards passed over the last decade have been supported on a bipartisan basis, and that was before the dramatic growth in manufacturing and construction jobs the industry created," said Rob Gramlich, the American Wind Energy Association's senior vice president for public policy. "Attacks on state renewable energy policies in 2012 failed consistently and we are confident they will again in 2013."

Wynn said that while it may be hard to make headway in the next year, he was optimistic his side could start to dismantle some of the state requirements in 2014.

"These discussions are just starting to ramp up, and the impacts of these mandates are just starting to be seen in these states," he said.

Resch said despite the policy differences between the state legislators' group and his industry, his group would maintain its membership.

"We're committed to work with conservatives, and ALEC is a vehicle to do that," he said.

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Message Headers:

From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>

To: Oscar Flores

Date: Sat, 24 Nov 2012 22:03:17 -0500

Subject: Pls print for me

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