

Comments submitted by North Dakota District 33 State Senator Jessica Unruh to the North Dakota Public Service Commission; PSC Symposium on EPA Carbon Regulation; January 22, 2014

I am here today to present comments regarding EPA's proposal to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from existing fossil-fueled electrical generation units and the effect these proposed regulations could have on over 14,000 citizens living in my district.

With all but one of North Dakota's coal-fired power plants located in District 33, no one population is more directly affected by these potentially devastating regulations than the people in my district. The coal industry in our state generates over 20,000 jobs, either directly at our coal mines and power plants or indirectly in supporting roles. These high-paying, dependable jobs support families and businesses, and provide important tax revenues for our schools, roads, police and other essential services. Jobs that would be in serious jeopardy if these proposed regulations are enacted.

Not only will District 33 be negatively impacted by the proposed regulations, but also the entire state and region. The six coal-fired electrical generation units in my district generate nearly 3,000 megawatts of electricity, serving millions of consumers in the Upper Midwest and Northern Great Plains. Regulating these and other coal-fired units out of existence by requiring the addition of expensive, currently commercially unproven technology could, in the words of our President, "make electricity rates necessarily skyrocket", all for little, if any, benefit. Alternatively shipping an abundant domestic energy resource overseas to countries with little to no emissions regulations would have a negative impact on the environment, and cripple our already struggling national economy. Coal should continue to be a main component for base-load power generation in our nation's energy policy, bringing us one step closer to energy independence. The proposed regulations are not the policies that make sense in our country right now, and certainly not in North Dakota. We have a booming economy and benefit from some of the lowest electricity rates in the nation, and enacting these regulations would unproportionately negatively impact our great state.

The citizens of my district are proud to produce some of the lowest cost and most dependable electrical power in the nation, all while responsibly protecting the environment. As an environmental specialist for the largest lignite coal mine in the United States, my job is to ensure the disturbed and reclaimed mine land meets or exceeds agricultural productivity levels present prior to mining. Under local regulatory control of the North Dakota Public Service Commission, North Dakota coal mines have continued to prove that mined and reclaimed land can meet the rigorous standards set by our state and return the land to as good or better than it was through the bond release process. North Dakota has nearly 40 years of experience proving that it can do all of this and continually have the cleanest air in the nation. Please note we are one of only seven states that currently meet federal ambient air quality standards. As North Dakotans, we consistently work hard to preserve our land, water, and air for future generations. We have a North Dakota heritage to preserve, and it is with great pride coal miners play an important role in doing so. North Dakota has a vibrant power generation industry, providing economical and dependable electricity to millions of Americans. This industry is fueled by low-cost lignite coal, mined by hard-working North Dakotans living and working in my Senate district. I take strong exception to any regulatory threat to my constituents' jobs or their livelihoods.

Our state policy and state regulators have continually been commended for the management of the many natural resources we have in our state. We do it right in North Dakota, and we don't need a Federal regulatory over-reach to step in and tell us how to manage our resources.

Thank you, again, Commissioners, for this opportunity to comment. I appreciate your efforts to include and educate the public in this important matter.