

AMY J. BLANKENBILLER: CAP-AND-TRADE WOULD BE HARMFUL TO KANSANS

BY AMY J. BLANKENBILLER

Few would disagree that being responsible stewards of the Earth and our environment is the prudent thing to do. But recent legislative efforts, an onslaught of media coverage, and celebrity activism are moving the issue, seemingly unchecked, toward one direction -- overregulation and taxation.

Without a clear understanding of the impact of these actions or consensus on the causes and trends of climate change, we could be heading toward "solutions" that are much more harmful to Kansas consumers and businesses than the environmental benefits they aim to provide.

It's crucial that we consider the science on climate change. For example, according to the Department of Energy, 5.5 percent of greenhouse gases are man-made, while the rest occur naturally in our atmosphere in the forms of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. If you include water vapor, the percentage of man-made greenhouse gases is much smaller.

And we must consider where the emissions of concern are being generated, at what rate and the prediction for future emissions. Specifically, the United States accounts for 17.5 percent of total greenhouse-gas emissions. China is currently responsible for 18.3 percent, and that number is increasing at a dramatic rate. According to the Energy Information Administration, China's emissions increased more between 2003 and 2004 than did U.S. emissions between 1993 and 2004.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Senate debated a bill that would establish a "cap-and-trade" program meant to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. The "cap" would lower the amount of emissions that a business or utility could release, while the "trade" would allow credits to be bought or sold to meet the aggressive emissions-reductions targets proposed in the legislation. But it is apparent that cap-and-trade is really just a new tax on energy use.

Economic studies -- including analyses conducted by the Congressional Budget Office, the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- have addressed the economic impact of cap-and-trade proposals. Each study concluded that consumers would pay significantly more for a wide array of products and services.

For Kansas, the NAM study predicts:

- Electricity price increases of up to 153 percent by 2030.

- Gasoline price increases of up to 140 percent by 2030.
- Natural gas price increases of up to 153 percent by 2030.
- Household income losses of up to \$7,200 by 2030.
- Employment losses of up to nearly 37,000 in 2030.
- Gross state product losses of up to \$5.7 billion by 2030.

If such a law passed, the cost of living and doing business in Kansas would greatly increase, adversely affecting every citizen and household, small and large businesses, state and local government, and even civic and nonprofit organizations.

With Kansas accountable for only 0.25 percent of total greenhouse-gas emissions, the real questions become: What impact did we have on global climate change? And at what cost?

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