

# Groups Spar Over Use of Money in Power Plant Fight

JEFF AMY, Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A free-market advocacy group that opposes Mississippi Power's \$4.7 billion coal-fired power plant under construction in Kemper County now finds itself on the defensive, accused of using public funds in the fight against the plant.

JobKeeper Alliance, a union-linked group based in Montgomery, Ala., claims the nonprofit Bigger Pie Forum is using public money held by the private Institute for Technology Development to oppose the plant.

JobKeeper Alliance wants Mississippi state Auditor Stacey Pickering to investigate whether public money is being funneled through ITD into Bigger Pie's opposition to Kemper in violation of any laws.

ITD was created to promote and commercialize research from Mississippi universities and has received millions of dollars in state and federal money. Bigger Pie Forum is a subsidiary of ITD. On its website, the forum says it focuses on ideas that "encourage economic freedom, discourage cronyism, and help Mississippi's economy grow."

Bigger Pie CEO J. Kelley Williams said the group has spent up to \$400,000 since 2012, but not all on opposition to Kemper. Williams said funding came from technology licensing proceeds and was spent legally.

JobKeeper Executive Director Patrick Cagle said Pickering should investigate the financial relationship between ITD and Bigger Pie.

In an opinion piece published Aug. 15 in The Clarion-Ledger newspaper, Cagle asked, "Why are ITD's unused funds not being returned to the state to repay the taxpayer money invested in the organization?"

Cagle also charged that Bigger Pie has been taking public money at the same time it is promoting "a less government, free-market philosophy explicitly opposed to taxpayer-funded subsidies for private business."

Williams countered that Cagle's claims are "blatantly false" and "reckless."

Pickering spokesman Brett Kittredge said Tuesday that the auditor is aware of the allegations, but wouldn't say whether the auditor's office is looking into them.

Cagle's charges are the latest in a series of attacks on opponents of the Kemper plant.

## Groups Spar Over Use of Money in Power Plant Fight

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

---

The pro-business Partnership for Affordable Clean Energy has purchased newspaper and billboard ads attacking another Kemper foe, the Sierra Club.

Alabama-based PACE claims the environmental group will cause electricity prices to rise "beyond affordable" with its opposition to burning coal to generate power. In Mississippi the Sierra Club has focused mainly on the cost and technical feasibility of the Kemper facility, called Plant Ratcliffe by Mississippi Power's parent, the Southern Co.

JobKeeper and PACE also have attacked opponents of Alabama Power, also a division of the Southern Co.

PACE was the first to publicize the link between ITD and Bigger Pie. It's not clear that ITD's involvement was unknown to Kemper supporters, however.

Until February, Hattiesburg wood products manufacturer Warren Hood Jr. was a member of the ITD board. Hood also is a member of the Southern Co. board. Multiple attempts to reach him for comment were unsuccessful.

JobKeeper has raised negative attention on Bigger Pie, buying radio ads attacking Williams and Bigger Pie President Ashby Foote. Union members passed out pro-Kemper flyers at the Neshoba County Fair last month before state officials spoke. Late last year, Mississippi Power agreed to hire union laborers at the plant, and unions switched from opposing to favoring Kemper.

"All they want to try to do is character assassination, which is really, for a Fortune 500 company, very unseemly," Foote said. "It's like mob tactics from a bunch of people who are supposed to be highly regarded."

Mississippi Power spokeswoman Amoi Geter wrote in an email Tuesday that the company had "played no role whatsoever" in efforts by PACE or JobKeeper.

Williams and Foote say Kemper was a colossal mistake forced on Mississippi Power's 186,000 ratepayers by pressure to inflate the company's profits. They say Mississippi Power should have built a natural gas plant instead, saying gas will be cheap for decades because of advances in drilling technology.

PACE and JobKeeper — like other Kemper proponents — say there's no guarantee natural gas prices will stay low and that the state will get an economic boost from the plant's use of nearby lignite deposits.

They say making Mississippi ratepayers depend on the price of natural gas puts them at risk of fuel price volatility.

—

Follow Jeff Amy at: <http://twitter.com/jeffamy> [1]

## Groups Spar Over Use of Money in Power Plant Fight

Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 12/21/2013 - 12:54pm):**

[http://www.chem.info/news/2013/08/groups-spar-over-use-money-power-plant-fight?qt-most\\_popular=0](http://www.chem.info/news/2013/08/groups-spar-over-use-money-power-plant-fight?qt-most_popular=0)

**Links:**

[1] <http://twitter.com/jeffamy>