IN Coal Industry Fights EPA Plant Limits

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INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Members of Indiana's coal industry and business community are heading to Chicago this week to fight against new limits on coal-fired plants they say would cost hundreds of jobs across the state.

The Environmental Protection Agency is considering cutting carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants as a measure to combat global warming. Opponents of the effort say it will wreak havoc on the economy, but environmentalists supporting the new limits say a burgeoning renewable energy industry would more than make up for any lost jobs.

If the EPA moves forward with the new set of regulations next year, existing coal-fired plants would have to find a way to limit carbon dioxide emissions. Bruce Stevens, vice president of the Indiana Coal Council, said it would most likely force plants to consider using unproven technology to reduce emissions.

Carbon capture and sequestration mechanisms have been worked on for years, but none are commercially viable yet, he said. The end result would be a massive loss in jobs and increase in utility bills, Stevens said.

"I think there is a very real danger they will move forward with this," Stevens said Wednesday of the EPA.

The EPA is holding "public listening sessions" for now and has not yet started the lengthy process needed to create a new federal regulation. But the question weighs heavy on Indiana, which is a major coal producer and also relies heavily on coal for power.

Environmental groups supporting the new limits note it is too early to say exactly what any federal rule would look like, because it hasn't been formally drafted yet. Jesse Kharbanda, executive director of the Hoosier Environmental Council, said there are a range of options available for reducing emissions.

He added that any loss in coal industry jobs could easily be offset by the creation of jobs building clean energy components.

"The absolute issue is to think about the net impact on jobs in Indiana, otherwise we're presenting a distorted analysis," Kharbanda said.

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