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EPA administrator says carbon rules could be boon for Wisconsin

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MILWAUKEE -- The Midwest's EPA chief said Wisconsin stands to gain economically from new rules that require states to cut carbon emissions from power plants by 30 percent within 15 years, rebutting opponents of the rule at a WisPolitics.com luncheon in Milwaukee.

Yesterday's luncheon led with a presentation by Susan Hedman, EPA Region 5 administrator, who outlined the proposed rules and suggested "building blocks" for states to proceed.

A panel discussion followed, comprised of: incoming PSC Chair Ellen Nowak; Nicholas Martin, manager of environmental policy for Xcel Energy; Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group executive director Todd Stuart; and Clean Wisconsin Senior Policy Director Keith Reopelle.

WisBusiness audio

- [Presentation by EPA's Susan Hedman](#)
- [Panel discussion on EPA rules](#)

Some of the panelists argued that the EPA rules are unreasonable, costly and unfair to a manufacturing state like Wisconsin, where many industries consume unusually high amounts of energy. Nowak called the potential economic effects "devastating."

But Hedman said heavy manufacturing states like Wisconsin can also benefit the most from energy savings. "States that choose to rely on energy efficiency can save consumers money," said Hedman.

Nowak said the EPA's goal of reducing carbon emissions in the state by 34 percent is unrealistic. "Why are we being forced to reach this goal?" she asked.

Reopelle, however, predicted the new EPA standards will have the opposite effect -- boosting the state's economy, for example, by bringing new areas of job creation.

"If you look at all the people employed by Facebook, Google and Apple put together, it's not as many jobs as the solar industry has created in this nation, and we could have many of those jobs in Wisconsin, plus we could see lower energy

bills," said Reopelle.

Nowak replied that other states have more sunshine and wind than Wisconsin, "We aren't Iowa; they have a lot more wind," she said. "It's not, 'If you build them, the wind will come,'" she said.

Panelists agreed that the EPA should give Wisconsin credit for prior investments made in energy efficiency.

"Since 2000, we've done over \$13 billion worth of infrastructure," said Stuart. "We already gave at the office."

Martin, of Xcel Energy, expressed concern about a 2020 "interim" deadline for Wisconsin to achieve 87 percent of the final 2030 reduction goal.

"We don't think it recognizes the time it takes to build electricity, transmission and gas infrastructures," said Martin.

Hedman told reporters afterward the EPA is considering revising the 2020 deadline, after reviewing more than 4 million comments on the plan nationwide.

"We are looking at all the comments and will have a final rule out this summer," she said.

Martin complimented the EPA for encouraging "an unprecedented amount of stakeholder consultation and listening to us, the states, to all the stakeholders before the rules were released, during the official comment period and continuing now." He also praised the EPA for including flexibility in the new rules.

-- *By Kay Nolan*
For WisBusiness.com

[PSC Chair Nowak: U.S. Senate testimony on state impact of EPA's 'Clean Power Plan'](#)