

Giant Mobile Coal Plant, Ogre-like Smokestack Patty Lands on Legislature

Groups unleash accountability campaign to protect Michigan's energy future

July 15, 2008 LANSING – With a 12-foot-tall effigy of **Sen. Patty Birkholz** and a 20-foot-tall inflatable coal plant looming over the State Capitol grounds, environmental watchdog groups today **called on Michigan citizens to oppose a Senate-passed energy plan that will open the floodgates to more dirty coal plants** and put a nail in the coffin of clean renewable energy in Michigan.

“Smokestack Patty Birkholz and her Senate coal industry stooges should start supporting clean renewable energy that can create good-paying Michigan jobs, not dirty coal plants that will send jobs and investments to other states,” Clean Water Action’s State Director Cyndi Roper said. **“Clean renewable energy is the future.** Michigan citizens will not stand idly by while Smokestack Patty and backward senators push energy policies that keep our state trapped in the energy Dark Ages.”

The Legislature is currently debating sweeping energy proposals and faces a choice on Michigan’s energy future: Investing in 21st century renewable energy and energy efficiency, or paving the way for more outdated coal. Senate action on Senate Bill 213 decisively drives the state toward more coal plants and away from renewable energy. Under the Senate plan, renewable energy standards were effectively gutted to the point of even including coal in the definition of renewable energy.

Clean Energy Now, a coalition of environmental and citizens’ watchdog groups, is calling on the Legislature to reverse course and urged citizens to send a letter to legislators urging them to reject dirty coal plants and support clean renewable energy. Citizens can send the letter by going to: www.smokestackpatty.com.

“Michigan is at a crossroads and faces a critical choice, and unfortunately Smokestack Patty and her Big Coal Stooges in the Senate are making the wrong choice in sending Michigan down the path of more dirty coal plants,” Sierra Club Executive Director Anne Woiwode said. “Coal costs have skyrocketed and even major banks are calling coal a bad investment. Despite all these warning signs, the Senate is choosing coal over 21st century renewable energy – and that means a big price we will all pay for generations to come.”

Kansas and Georgia are among many states that have cracked down on the construction of more coal plants. **Around 60 new coal plant projects across the nation have been abandoned because of the high costs.** Michigan, however, is alone in the nation in actually facing eight new coal plants – unless the Legislature chooses to invest in clean renewable energy.

The Senate is paving the way for more outdated coal-burning plants in passing a backward-

looking energy plan that guts renewable energy, kills energy efficiency programs and opens the door to the construction of more coal plants in Michigan. Birkholz is the architect of the Senate plan, with support from Majority Leader Mike Bishop and others that have been widely denounced by opinion leaders and the news media.

"At a time when we should be moving Michigan forward towards a clean energy future, the Senate took a giant step backwards. **Requiring a mere 7% renewable energy by 2015 and loopholes big enough to drive a Hummer through** is not enough for Michigan to reap the benefits of the renewable energy sector, said Abby Rubley, Policy Director for the Michigan League of Conservation Voters. We will not see the jobs, we will not protect the health of the citizens of Michigan by reducing CO2 emissions and we will not protect our most valuable natural resources – the Great Lakes."

Clean Energy Now called on the legislature to increase investments in clean renewable energy because it has proven to be one of the top drivers of economic growth globally and creates more jobs than outdated coal projects. Worldwide, clean energy projects account for \$100 billion in new economic activity, according to the Department of Energy. **Michigan stands to gain 45,000 new good-paying jobs if it invests in 21st century renewable projects and energy efficiency, according to the Renewable Energy Project and the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy.**

"Michigan is getting left behind while other states and countries are attracting jobs and investments, thanks to the Senate's short-sighted, backward energy plan," said Terry Miller, Executive Director for Lone Tree Council. "Clean renewable energy means clean Michigan energy and good-paying Michigan jobs. Unless the Senate reverses course and starts making the right choice of investing in clean renewable energy, Michigan will lose out on a tremendous opportunity to create jobs, protect our Great Lakes and move our economy forward."

The mobile inflatable coal plant and the giant effigy of Smokestack Patty made its first appearance in Lansing, with possible stops in other communities in the near future to warn citizens about the consequences of the Senate-passed plan and the dangers of saddling the state with more coal for generations to come.

Groups participating in today's press conference include: Anne Woiwode, executive director of the Sierra Club; Cyndi Roper, state director of Clean Water Action; Terry Miller of Lone Tree Council, which is opposing coal plants slated for Midland and Bay City; Rachel Hood, executive director of West Michigan Environmental Council; Patty Gillis of Voices for Earth Justice; Abby Rubley, policy director of Michigan League of Conservation Voters; Dan Farough, executive director of Progress Michigan.

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