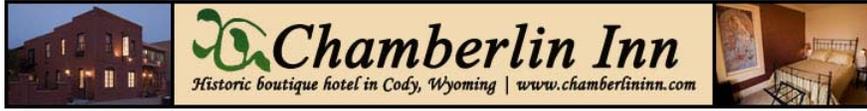


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Wyoming GOP energy plan: full-throttle domestic production



An oil pipeline in Jefferson County, Texas. Republicans in Wyoming and the federal government have recently rolled out a plan to vamp up energy production across the country to create jobs and lower dependence on foreign oil. Prominent GOP leaders say President Barack Obama has made too little of an effort to do so. (Ray Bodden/Flickr — click to enlarge)

by *Dustin Bleizeffer*

A new energy plan by the Republican Governors Association calls for an immediate acceleration of domestic energy resources, which the group claims will provide the economic boost needed to help lift the economy out of a slump.

And it can be accomplished “all while advancing environmental progress,” according to the partisan group’s plan, “[An Energy Blueprint for America](#).”



Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead co-wrote an editorial last week to make a case for increasing domestic energy production. (click to enlarge)

Central to the plan is wresting some environmental authority away from the federal government and handing it to states, which have the most incentive and know-how to balance energy production and the environment, according to Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead, one of the lead authors of the plan.

“Increasing American energy production could create millions of well-paying jobs, provide new revenues to pay down the federal debt, restore confidence to every business and provide more affordable energy to households across America – all while advancing environmental progress. Unfortunately, after nearly four years in office, the president has failed to develop a sensible, comprehensive energy policy,” Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead and Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell [wrote in an op-ed](#) last week.

Critics say the plan is almost fully tilted toward fossil fuels and aims to slash regulation while glossing over environmental protections on federal lands.

“I don’t see much balance here,” said Wilma Tope, chairwoman of the Sheridan-based landowner advocacy group, Powder River Basin Resource Council. “I think we will never have balance because we have an industry — a multi-billion dollar industry — that has the ability to out-influence any landowner or landowner group.”

Tope said she is among hundreds of people in Wyoming who have participated in Gov. Mead’s current initiative to establish a Wyoming-wide energy policy, and now it seems the governor has preempted that effort. “It looks to me like all the time we spent in Casper and down there (in Cheyenne) meant nothing,” said Tope.

Gov. Mead announced the Energy Blueprint plan on Wednesday while delivering a keynote address at the Petroleum Association of Wyoming’s annual meeting in Casper.

“We can only get there with maximum participation from industry,” Mead told the group. “Too many people simply don’t understand where energy comes from.”

Republican presidential candidate [Mitt Romney rolled out his own energy plan](#) on Thursday, calling for a massive boost in domestic energy production that he says would result in North American energy independence by 2020.

There are many similarities between Romney’s plan and the Republican Governor Association’s plan, such as a call to streamline and modernize regulatory permitting for energy development on public lands, and a call to complete the Keystone XL pipeline to carry crude from Canadian tar sands to the Gulf Coast. Backers of both plans also say that federal pollution controls ought to be set by a monetary cost-benefit analysis, claiming that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Obama administration has implemented tougher standards on the coal industry that cost more than the value of the human health and environmental benefits.

This excerpt is from Page 2 of the Republican Governors Association’s “[An Energy Blueprint for America: Policy Solutions for a new Energy Economy](#)”:

“It is important to recognize that while we have achieved significant environmental progress our core environmental statutes have not been modernized in over 20 years. Unfortunately, over this time regulators have become more myopic, willing to impose regulations with smaller environmental benefits, despite larger economic consequences. The time has come to examine our statutes and regulatory implementation practices and make them more results-oriented, adaptable to changing costs and needs, and cognizant of the impact of regulations on jobs and the economy. For example, a series of newly proposed and enacted EPA regulations under the Obama Administration will dramatically increase energy costs, threaten electric reliability, and negatively impact all consumers. These new regulations highlight the need for regulatory reform.”

While news of the Energy Blueprint was well-received by Wyoming oil and gas producers at the Casper event last week, others in Wyoming say they’re disappointed that Gov. Mead is pushing a partisan energy plan that appears to dismiss environmental concerns and includes little mention of climate change.

“By focusing on the goal of energy security, these plans do little to address the other side of the equation — environmental security,” said Richard Garrett, legislative and energy advocate for the Wyoming Outdoor Council. “Climate change is a reality, the symptoms are evident and the consequences clear. In fact, if we don’t move quickly and forcefully to address the warming of the planet, we are certain to undermine the goal of energy security.”

Garrett noted that Romney’s plan would amend the Clean Air Act to remove regulatory oversight of carbon dioxide (CO2), a powerful greenhouse gas and major contributor climate change.

“Drill baby drill has not been our savior for jobs or our economy,” Powder River Basin Resource Council organizer Jill Morrison said in a written response to WyoFile. “Witness [Wyoming’s declining revenues](#). In fact, drill baby drill has led to a bust in the natural gas market and declining revenues in our state. Now the taxpayers and the landowners are going to pay the cost of reclamation for the thousands of [gas wells left unplugged and abandoned](#)?”

Morrison said Wyoming citizens are getting a lot of election year rhetoric on energy policy. In fact, energy policy is a central issue in the upcoming election, at least according to Wyoming’s all-GOP congressional delegation.

Wyoming’s Congressional delegates critical of Obama on energy



At the Petroleum Association of Wyoming’s annual meeting last week, Sen. Mike Enzi said of Obama: “He’s waging a war against energy.” (Click to enlarge)

Wyoming Sens. Mike Enzi and John Barrasso, and Rep. Cynthia Lumis, all spoke at the Petroleum Association of Wyoming’s annual meeting last week in Casper. Like Gov. Mead, all three congressional officials squarely blame the Obama administration for the nation’s energy woes.

Discussing federal regulations, Sen. Barrasso said, “The costs are real, the benefits are unknown, but they (EPA) continue to do this regulatory jihad that is coming out, with Lisa Jackson leading the way, the head of the EPA, and you know it’s astonishing that they believe that regulations are stimulatory to the economy because you have to then hire people to fill out the paper work. They don’t understand, this administration does not understand the difference between actually productive work versus hiring people to fill out paperwork, which

is a drag.”

Sen. Barrasso also blamed president Obama for gasoline prices.

“Gasoline prices continue to go up. People understand supply and demand and they understand that it is the policies of the Obama administration that is causing those prices to go up,” Barrasso said.

Sen. Enzi said of President Obama, “He’s waging a war against energy. Now, he says he’s for energy, for all types of energy. But his actions speak louder than his words. And you know that if you’re on the ground working with his words.” Enzi added, “We know that the president is against fossil fuels, we know that he doesn’t have any belief or confidence in the American inventiveness.”



Gasoline prices during the summer of 2011 at a Gasamat in Torrington, Wyoming. Sen. John Barrasso says that President Barack Obama’s policies have caused a rise in gas prices in recent years, while Jill Morrison of the Powder River Basin Resource Council said outside factors were to blame. (Erin/Flickr — click to enlarge)

Morrison said Barrasso’s claim that the Obama administration is to blame for rising gasoline prices defies fact and logic.

“The fact is that oil is traded on the world market,” said Morrison. “If Middle East tensions or other factors beyond our control cause prices to spike, everyone is affected, regardless of where they get their oil. A perfect example of this is Canada. Canada is an oil independent nation, a net oil exporter, but gasoline prices in Canada still rise and fall in accordance with world events, just as they do in the United States or Europe.”

As for the boom-style ramp up in domestic energy production envisioned under the GOP-led energy plans, Morrison said, “Ask North Dakota residents who saw their housing and food prices double and triple and now have increased crime and uncontrolled traffic problems how great the Bakken boom has been.”

Barrasso easily won last week’s primary and now faces Democratic challenger Tim Chesnut, an Albany County commissioner, in his bid to retain his senate seat. Chesnut responded to Barrasso’s comments to Wyoming’s oil and gas industry, saying “What a ra-ra pep rally comment to the people that are funding his campaign. Really, President Obama wants red-white-and blue energy to be more expensive is just ridiculous.”

As for charges that the Obama administration is using punitive regulatory rules against energy producers, Chesnut said, “Daemonizing the EPA is just more party politic crap that every Republican from John Beohner on down are spewing. At a time when Wyoming has the highest workplace (fatality) rate in the country the industry should be up on murder charges, not increased regulation.”

In an interview with WyoFile, Rep. Lummis said she objects to the EPA’s implementation of its Maximum Attainable Control Technologies (MACT) rule to reduce mercury and other toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants.

“They (EPA) are advocating Maximum Attainable Control Technologies. So a company would have to install whatever is the maximum attainable technology to control pollution, whether or not it actually improves the environment. And so it is imposing a cost with no quantifiable benefit. Those are the types of rules I have the most concern about,” Lummis told WyoFile.

In fact, EPA does attempt to estimate the cost benefit of avoided health impacts, as noted in this [January 2011 Congressional Research Office report](#) on EPA’s boiler MACT rule; “EPA estimates that the benefits — including the avoidance of 1,900 to 4,800 premature deaths annually — would outweigh the costs by at least \$14 billion per year.”

Lummis said she will continue to push against federal regulations in order to create more jobs.

“The people here in Wyoming I talk to, for example, who are producing energy are producing something we know we need more of to displace product coming from overseas,” Lummis told WyoFile. “They’re telling me it is regulations that prevent them, as well as uncertainty, from drilling more, creating more jobs in the oilfield, the gas field, and certainly the regulations on coal are having an impact on employment.”

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{ 11 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

Brodie Farquhar [September 2, 2012 at 7:43 am](#)

Interesting how conservatives often decry instances where federal government fails to fully protect workers, the environment, consumers, then use that as an excuse to turn the job over to the even weaker state governments, or to “self-regulating” industries. This is kinda like the mob preferring Mayberry’s Barney Fife to highly trained FBI. It makes criminal behavior soooooo much easier.

Ron S [August 31, 2012 at 9:51 pm](#)

HEALTH of the people should supercede all reasons for policies

We only get one earth....don’t mess it up.

[John Garrett August 31, 2012 at 4:52 am](#)

Bud Tugley the article you post states ‘The mill provided uranium to the federal government.’

So this uranium mine was on the Wind River Indian Reservation, federal jurisdiction, and the uranium produced there was for the federal government – which has a long history of doing what it wants how it wants without regard for what is best of Wyoming. We can do better.

Yes. You have made a good point. Thanks.

Bud Tugley [August 30, 2012 at 1:55 pm](#)

Here’s an example of unregulated mineral production with the taxpayers picking up the bill:

Workers are sampling water near a former uranium mill on the Wind River Indian Reservation to see how flooding two years ago has affected the movement of contaminants there.

April Gill of the U.S. Department of Energy said that there was a significant rise in the amounts of uranium in the water after the flood of 2010. She said uranium contamination has gone up as much as six times in some places since the flooding interrupted the natural flushing of contaminants underground.

Read more: http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/water-tested-near-former-wind-river-uranium-mill/article_70ad5418-b74a-5e06-82ff-ed066329c222.html#ixzz253qG4jf0

Give states authority over energy production? Yeah, that’d work...

[joel Otto August 29, 2012 at 11:14 am](#)

Seeking balance between the competing interests of production and preservation will always be an issue. What is so bad about ditching the EPA and working it out where it is actually happening, here in Wyoming, at the state level?

How’s that EPA managed “wildlife-decimated, industrial sacrifice zone near Pinedale,” as Brodie described it below, working out for us? Or viewed by industry, permitting delays and regulatory costs. We have a federal management problem, and it’s time to change managers.

[John Garrett August 28, 2012 at 5:09 pm](#)

It’s good to read that the adults have a plan, and if you enjoy the 21st century lifestyle than you should embrace this plan that will deliver the energy this nation requires to sustain good paying jobs for the middle class. If, however, you are incapable of seeing beyond the zero sum gain mentality of such neg-profits as the Wyoming Outdoor Council then you should at least have the intellectual honesty to admit you have no solutions and only fear to peddle. Lastly, the ‘\$14 billion per year’ figure regurgitated by the EPA to justify their actions is pulled from thin air and has no real basis in reality.

Woody Wheeler [August 28, 2012 at 1:55 pm](#)

This plan sounds like the “legitimate rape” of Wyoming and the rest of the U.S. environment in search of traditional energy resources. There is no vision here; just a return to the same old reliance upon fossil fuels that the Bush/Cheney administration pursued during their two terms. Instead, we need to move forward to cleaner, longer-term solutions to energy beginning with aggressive conservation measures (i.e. fuel-efficient cars, homes and buildings), and leading to the development of alternative energy sources, including wind power and solar. During the interim, fossil fuels, especially natural gas, will continue to play an important role as bridge fuels to our energy future.

krallsa [August 28, 2012 at 12:10 pm](#)

Fear tactics. No one wants government subsidies unless it puts money in their own pocket. Drought relief, cheap AUMs, federal highway funds and pipelines. The “nay-sayers” still love all that. I wish we could focus a little further on down the road. I wish the younger generation, new voters, were angrier at the road we are paving ahead for them. I don’t understand why they can not see the devastation and degradation that lies ahead. I wish we could all see a little further on out the gate.

Shannon [August 28, 2012 at 8:00 am](#)

“wresting some environmental authority away from the federal government and handing it to states” takes us back to the race-to-the-bottom regulatory climate we had prior to the landmark 70’s era environmental laws. Seems like this “energy plan” would be a step backward for WY and the nation.

DeweyV [August 28, 2012 at 7:51 am](#)

Wyoming’s operative energy policy at the state level is indistinguishable from operating a hydrocarbon brothel. A neverending demand and a merchant with a huge supply of the product. Business may be booming, but it’s still a brothel...

Brodie Farquhar [August 28, 2012 at 6:58 am](#)

Interesting that while Sen. Barrasso blames President Obama when gasoline prices go up, he’s curiously silent when prices go down. Hmmm. What? No love for the President when prices go down? That doesn’t seem fair.

And of course the GOP wants state control of the regulatory process. Historically, we know that it costs industry less to persuade state and local officials to bend the rules and cut some regulatory slack for industry. The losers, every time, are workers, the environment and taxpayers.

Hey, if you love the wildlife-decimated, industrial sacrifice zone near Pinedale, imagine that spread even wider across Wyoming.

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