

## **McCain and Obama camps clash over possibility of EPA climate regulations**

By Darren Samuelsohn, *E&ENews PM* senior reporter  
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A left-leaning interest group attacked Republican presidential nominee John McCain's campaign today for conflicting statements about global warming policy and how the Arizona senator would regulate heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions if he wins the White House.

McCain's running mate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin (R), gave the Center for American Progress an opening this morning when she implied during a speech in Ohio that a McCain administration would not impose new government regulations when taking on climate change.

"We will control greenhouse gas emissions by giving American businesses new incentives and new rewards to seek, instead of just giving them new taxes to pay and new orders that they must follow, 'so says government,'" Palin said during a visit to Xunlight Energy, a Toledo-based solar-power component manufacturing company.

Joseph Romm, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, said Palin's comment means a President McCain would not follow through with the Supreme Court's 2007 decision in *Massachusetts v. EPA*, which requires the federal government to begin rulemakings to control for greenhouse gases if it determines that they are a threat to public health or welfare.

"It's time to stop trying to guess whether the latest McCain campaign gaffe revision on global warming means the Arizonan has walked away from his previous support for mandatory government control of greenhouse gases," Romm said. "He has."

Romm also questioned McCain's commitment based on his past statements and Senate votes, as well as his decision to pick Palin for a vice president when she has questioned the science linking humans to global warming.

In a telephone interview, McCain domestic economic adviser Doug Holtz-Eakin rejected the argument that his candidate would not follow through with a campaign pledge to push legislation that seeks to control greenhouse gas emissions through a cap-and-trade program.

"He would comply with the Supreme Court ruling, of course," Holtz-Eakin said. "This process has already begun. But where do you place the effort?"

While McCain would not stop U.S. EPA from following the Supreme Court ruling, Holtz-Eakin maintained his administration's preferred approach would be to go through Congress.

"You don't hear John McCain saying the best thing to do is get the Clean Air Act going. Get the EPA shutting down coal-fired power plants," he said. "His emphasis has been on a legislative fix. That legislative fix addresses the environmental concerns and the features of the U.S. economy."

Turning tables on Obama

During an interview Sunday with CBS's "Face the Nation," Holtz-Eakin also mocked Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama's campaign for suggesting that it would launch EPA rulemakings if Congress cannot pass comprehensive global warming legislation first.

"And so the question will be: Who can most quickly generate jobs in this economy, to keep the unemployment rate from spiking so high? At the heart of that, is having comprehensive policies ... that have a real energy policy that would allow us to grow," Holtz-Eakin said. "I mean, you know, Senator Obama has promised that, day one, he would enforce the Clean Air Act, treating carbon dioxide as a pollutant. That runs the economy from the Environmental Protection Agency. It's a draconian regulatory approach. That's not a rescue for jobs."

Holtz-Eakin acknowledged that he was referring to comments from Obama energy and environmental adviser Jason Grumet, who told Bloomberg News earlier this month that the Illinois Democrat would clear his EPA to begin the rulemaking process for greenhouse gases.

"The EPA is obligated to move forward in the absence of congressional action," Grumet said earlier this month, according to Bloomberg. "If there's no action by Congress in those 18 months, I think any responsible president would want to have the regulatory approach."

The Bloomberg story said Obama "would be the first president to group emissions blamed for global warming into a category of pollutants that includes lead and carbon monoxide." The article also said Obama's decision could halt construction of many new coal-fired power plants.

Several leading conservative outlets, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, immediately challenged the Obama campaign's plans. The Wall Street Journal editorial board labeled Grumet's comments as a "carbon ultimatum."

But Obama campaign officials have taken issue with the Bloomberg story, insisting it gave an inaccurate portrayal of their climate position. In a prepared statement, Heather Zichal, another Obama adviser based in the campaign's Chicago headquarters, said last week that Grumet was only answering the reporter's questions about how long regulations typically take to produce.

Grumet was explaining that "a rule of thumb for complex rulemaking is about 18 months," Zichal said.

Zichal's statement insisted that both Obama and McCain would take the same course on the EPA issue.

"Senator Obama strongly believes that the next president must restore credibility to energy and environmental policymaking and cease the practice of substituting politics for science," Zichal said. "Released from political interference, EPA is likely to make the endangerment finding consistent with its obligations under the recent Supreme Court decision. This finding will require EPA to initiate a series of rulemakings to address carbon."

Like McCain, Zichal said the Illinois Democrat would rather see Congress move climate legislation. "Senator Obama believes that comprehensive congressional action is far superior to a regulatory approach and will work aggressively with Congress to pass legislation," she said. "If Congress is unable to act in a timely manner, any responsible president would want to have the regulatory process under way to reduce emissions and comply with the law."

Holtz-Eakin, however, challenged Obama's record on climate legislation and trumpeted his candidate's long-standing leadership dating back to 2001. "Barack Obama has never done anything on climate change except vote for John McCain's bill and talk a lot," he said. "His most recent talk is to emphasize the Clean Air Act. Which means he's not learned much."

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