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Senator Shelley Moore Capito

https://www.wvgazette.com/opinion/daily_mail_opinion/commentary/sen-shelley-moore-capito-trump-epa-bringing-positive-change-daily/article_1a739990-2eb7-5a57-a274-d9069e795c83.html

This Tuesday and Wednesday, the Environmental Protection Agency is holding a listening session in Charleston on its proposal to withdraw from the Obama administration's so-called Clean Power Plan.

The Trump administration's decision to withdraw from this plan, and the decision to hear directly from West Virginians, demonstrate a positive change from the job-killing policies of the previous administration.

West Virginians expect federal agencies to follow the law. We want leaders to consider the impact of regulations on jobs and the economy. And, importantly, officials must listen to those Americans who will be most impacted by their decisions. It's clear that this administration and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt are changing course.

The Clean Power Plan was an effort by the Obama administration to force states to turn away from coal-powered electricity. Congress never gave EPA the authority to implement such a sweeping regulatory change — and that is why the U.S. Supreme Court took the rare step of blocking implementation of the rule before it could take effect.

Legislation I introduced to overturn the rule was passed by both the Senate and the House, but was vetoed by President Barack Obama.

West Virginia is the nation's second-largest coal producing state. Because coal accounts for over 94 percent of electricity generation in our state, West Virginians would have been disproportionately impacted by the Clean Power Plan.

Our state lost thousands of good-paying jobs due in large part to other EPA overreaches. And government budgets at the state and local levels were decimated by the loss of tax revenue that coal has long provided in our state.

But Obama's EPA refused to hold a listening session on the Clean Power Plan in West Virginia.

Instead, the previous administration chose to listen in places like San Francisco, Boston and New York City.

It was clear that Obama's EPA had no desire to hear from the miners, truck drivers, railroad workers, small businesses and many others across coal country whose livelihoods would be most impacted by the rule.

At a Senate hearing, I asked former EPA Air Chief Janet McCabe why the Obama administration chose not to visit West Virginia. She responded that EPA held its public events where it was "comfortable."

After a difficult eight years, it is refreshing to see that the Trump administration is comfortable listening to the needs of working families here in West Virginia.

President Donald Trump and our Republican congressional majority are rolling back some of the worst regulatory abuses of the previous administration. In February, Congress passed, and Trump signed, legislation to block a last-minute rule proposed by Obama's Interior Department that could have cost thousands of jobs.

Everyone agrees that we need clean air and clean water; still, West Virginians should not be forced to choose between economic prosperity and a clean environment. We expect both.

That is why federal environmental laws like the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act provide for cooperation between federal authorities and state officials. This structure allows states to make decisions that are best for local communities' economic and environmental needs.

The last administration upset that balance in favor of heavy-handed control from Washington. That led more than half the states to follow West Virginia's lead in filing suit against the Clean Power Plan.

Congress and the Trump administration are working to restore the proper balance that enforces our environmental laws while protecting our jobs. And we are already seeing positive results. West Virginia coal production was up 23 percent in the first half of 2017 as compared with the first half of 2016.

The Trump administration is bringing the change to regulatory policy that West Virginians voted for. I welcome the new EPA to Charleston and will continue working with President Trump to keep West Virginia a leading energy producer for generations to come.

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U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., chairs the Clean Air and Nuclear Subcommittee on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

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