

OPINION

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Don't restrict coal's use

I am a former coal mine operator and a longtime local government official. With knowledge and years of experience, I feel compelled to write on the issue of climate change.

The issue of how to address climate change is complex and faces policy makers at all levels in our country. We must find a solution that meets the increasing energy demands of our society without risking sharp sacrifices in quality of life and national economic stability.

As addressed in Sen. [Phillip] Puckett's Dec. 16 column, "Don't restrict the use of coal for power," the need to develop and implement technology to make coal clean and safe should be a top priority, rather than a blanket limit on coal usage. Simply penalizing coal due to its carbon content and emissions based on current technology will result in rationing of coal to America's

severe detriment.

The coal mining industry, which employs more than 116,000 Americans, is committed to promoting the accelerated development, demonstration and widespread commercial deployment of advanced clean-coal carbon capture and storage technologies that will dramatically reduce greenhouse gasses from electricity generated from coal.

Congress has the ability to support and work with several ventures for the sake of achieving this goal. The carbon capture and storage [CCS] provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 can reduce the gap between current technology and affordable, large-scale deployment. Funding the seven Regional Sequestration Partnerships, which are joint ventures between the Department of Energy and coal-based electric generation industry, would significantly advance these CCS

projects.

Additionally, the FutureGen project, seeking to create the world's first zero-emissions fossil fuel plant, and the Incentives for Innovative Technologies program, providing guarantees for private sector loans to help fund new or significantly improved energy technologies, should be supported and fostered to advance the availability of clean technology.

Lastly, Congress should take steps to adopt CURC-EPRI [the Coal Utilization and Research Council and the Electric Power Research Institute technology roadmap], which packages near and long-term incentives, regulatory reforms and appropriation goals to reduce emissions at existing coal-fueled power plants, which would help make CCS technology commercially available at an estimated \$2 billion per year for 15 years.

More than 50 percent of America's power is generated from coal, with a domestic reserve that could supply the country for 240 years at current usage rates. The world has long depended specifically on Virginia companies to provide raw materials for energy creation, but no resource more than coal. Hasty restrictions based on faulty science, and limiting technology development to wind, solar and nuclear power, will only increase our dependence on foreign energy sources and extend our country's exposure to foreign terrorist threats.

Virginians should insist our policy makers start taking steps toward real solutions to protect our environment, save our jobs, and maintain our economy, and clean coal is a realistic and attainable goal vital to that solution.

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