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Stephen Hoffman

Form Letter M 181-358

From: EP, RegComments <ra-epregcomments@pa.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 8:22 AM
To: IRRC
Cc: EP, RegComments; Fiona Cormack; Scott Schalles
Subject: Final Count - Form Letter 13 - Proposed Rulemaking: CO2 Budget Trading Program (# 7-559)
Attachments: Form Letter 13_RGGI Shutter Businesses (7-559).pdf

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Good morning,

Attached is a form letter DEP received regarding Proposed Rulemaking: CO₂ Budget Trading Program (#7-559). We labeled this letter "Form Letter 13: RGGI Will Shutter Businesses" (IRRC Form Letter M).

We received a total of **358** copies of this letter via email during the public comment period.

Thank you,
Laura

Laura Griffin | Regulatory Coordinator
Department of Environmental Protection | Policy Office
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street | Harrisburg, PA
Phone: 717.772.3277 | Fax: 717.783.8926
Email: laurgriffi@pa.gov
www.dep.pa.gov



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In order to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, all DEP offices will remain closed until restrictions are lifted. In the meantime, I will be working remotely to continue the mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and frequently retrieving emails. Thank you for your patience.

FORM LETTER 13: "RGGI Will Shutter Businesses"

Proposed Rulemaking: CO₂ Budget Trading Program (#7-559)

Dear DEP Quality Board,

I write in opposition to Governor Tom Wolf's proposed regulation, CO₂ Budget Trading Program as published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin on November 7, 2020 (50. Pa.B. 6212), which will join Pennsylvania to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). I urge the Independent Regulatory Reform Commission (IRRC) to reject Governor Wolf's proposed RGGI tax.

It is my understanding that IRRC reviews a proposed regulation based on certain criteria, including:

- Is the proposed CO₂ Budget Trading Program authorized by statute and does it conform with the intention of the General Assembly?
- Will RGGI hurt the economy? Will it impact state tax revenues? Does RGGI have a negative impact on small businesses?
- Does RGGI protect the public health, safety, and welfare?
- Is RGGI feasible and reasonable for Pennsylvania?

Governor Wolf's proposed RGGI tax regulation fails on each of these criteria.

Pennsylvania law neither authorizes nor requires the regulation of carbon dioxide, a life essential gas. In addition, under the Pennsylvania constitution, RGGI is a \$2.4 billion "tax" on every ton of carbon dioxide emitted from a fossil fuel plant. Any new tax must be expressly authorized by the General Assembly. In fact, every current RGGI state had express authorization from its legislature to implement RGGI or, like New York, regulate carbon dioxide.

RGGI will most certainly impair Pennsylvania's economy through fossil fuel plant closures and thousands of lost jobs. Pennsylvania income tax revenue will certainly decline along with local property and sales taxes collected in the affected communities. The adoption of RGGI will result in the loss of over 8,000 jobs, the loss of \$2.87 billion in total economic impact, the loss of \$539 million in employee compensation and the loss of \$34.2 million to state and local taxes.

Two-thirds of our electric generation will be rendered uncompetitive, which in turn will lead to increased electric rates in-state and a migration of new generation investment across our borders to states like Ohio and West Virginia which do not participate in RGGI.

And for what?

The Governor's own modeling confirms that most of the carbon dioxide reductions from plant closures or reduced generation will simply shift to neighboring, non-RGGI states, like Ohio and West Virginia. Those states will also take all the related jobs, capital expenditures and, yes, carbon dioxide and pollutants. As a result, carbon dioxide will increase in those states and our region, which will more than offset any carbon dioxide reductions in Pennsylvania.

RGGI makes no sense for a state like Pennsylvania, which possesses an abundance of coal and natural gas resources, and as a result, has the most reliable, affordable and resilient portfolio of electric generation in the country. None of the other RGGI states can boast these natural resource and generation assets, nor do they generate the electricity they consume. Over the past few years, 16 new natural gas plants have been built (at a cost of nearly \$16 billion) in Pennsylvania as a result of access to low-cost, reliable natural gas reserves and our competitive market, which will be undermined by the RGGI tax. The adoption of RGGI will mark an unprecedented action by the Commonwealth the use of a regulation to destroy an industry and impose direct economic harm on Pennsylvania communities.

It is the fiduciary obligation of the IRRRC to intercede on behalf of the Commonwealth, and on behalf of the citizens of the affected communities who have been denied their legal right to confront the bureaucracy that seeks to destroy their lives and livelihoods, and to recognize this harmful regulation, lacking basis in Pennsylvania law, for the political power play that it is, and stop it from proceeding.

The PADEP's own Small Business Advisory Committee (SBAC), along with two other PADEP advisory committees - the Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee and the Citizens Advisory Council - rejected the draft RGGI regulation. Why? Because RGGI will shutter businesses in impacted communities and increase electric rates for Pennsylvania business owners.

To add insult to injury, in spite of Governor Wolf's promise for "robust and public outreach" to impacted workers and communities, the Wolf Administration is now manipulating the regulatory process to eliminate any meaningful opportunity for the general public to get involved.

The so-called public comment period will run between November 7, 2020 and January 14, 2021 a sixty-nine day period during which there will be three national holidays and the General Assembly, by constitutional mandate, is forced to end its two-year legislative session on November 30, 2020. In 2021, it is unlikely that the General Assembly standing committees, which are intended to play a prominent role in the regulatory process, will even be formed until February 2021, well after the end of the public comment period. In addition, and in direct violation of the Air Pollution Control Act (APCA), the so-called public hearings include five days of ten double session virtual hearings in mid-December and none will be held in the impacted communities, as required by law.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please reject the RGGI tax regulation and protect the jobs of thousands of Pennsylvanians struggling to make ends meet during this terribly difficult pandemic recession.