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Energy

House committee moves RGGI bill closer to full vote



RECOMMENDED

The Bruce Mansfield coal-fired power plant as seen on May 30, 2018. The coal-fired power plants in Pennsylvania that have remained after the Mansfield plant's closing will be under increasing pressure if Pennsylvania joins the carbon trading program RGGI. PAUL J. GOUGH

IN THIS ARTICLE

Government & Regulations

Industry

Politics

Topic

Environment

Topic

Coal

Topic

Beaver Valley Power Station

Company

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental

By Paul J.
Gough Reporter,
Pittsburgh
Business
Times
Jun 8,
2021,
12:29pm
EDT

Legislation that would allow the General Assembly to

Protection

Company

Pam Snyder

Person

More

vote to keep

Pennsylvania

out of the

Regional

Greenhouse

Gas Initiative

was approved

Tuesday

morning by

the House

Environmental

Resources and

Energy

Committee. It

now moves to

the full House,

where a

similar bill

passed there

and the Senate

before being

vetoed by Gov.

Wolf last year.

The vote on

House Bill 637

was 17-8, with

all of the

committee's

Republicans

and two

Democrats,

state Rep. Pam

Snyder,

D-Greene

County, and

state Rep.

Manuel

Guzman,

D-Berks

County, voting

in favor. The

other

Democrats

opposed it.

It's the latest

battle in the

war over RGGI,

a carbon

trading

program that

northeastern

states have

joined that is

designed to

limit carbon

dioxide

pollution from

fossil-fuel-

fired power

plants.

Advocates for

the coal

industry, both

mines and the

power plants

that are

mainly in

western

Pennsylvania,

say that

joining RGGI

will drive

them out of

business.

They're joined

in the effort by

the GOP-led

General

Assembly as

well as many

Pennsylvania

labor unions

whose

members work

in or with the

coal industry.

But RGGI's

supporters,

along with

Gov. Tom

Wolf, say

Pennsylvania

needs to do

more to move

into the

energy future

and that the

proceeds from

the carbon-

trading

auctions will

go to help

energy

efficiency and

communities

hurt by coal-

related

closures.

Wolf and the

Pennsylvania

Department of

Environmental

Protection are

aiming to join

RGGI in 2022,

and a big vote

by the

Environmental

Quality Board

to approve the

draft

regulations

authorizing

the workings

of RGGI will

likely occur in

the fall. HB

637 would

require the

DEP to hold

four public

hearings all

over

Pennsylvania

on RGGI and

then force

legislative

action to

approve taxes

or fees on

carbon

emissions. Its

prime sponsor

Rep. James

Struzzi,

R-Indiana

County, told

the committee

before the

vote that the

General

Assembly and

by extension

Pennsylvania

residents,

have been

circumvented from having a say in whether Pennsylvania should join RGGI.

"Simply, it's been rubber stamped," Struzzi said. "To me, that's unacceptable." He was joined by Chair Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler County, who said no other state had joined RGGI without the approval of the Legislature.

Struzzi said neither Wolf nor the DEP secretary had

been to

Indiana

County to

explain the

plan to help

the region if

the two coal-

fired power

plants in his

district shut

down.

Another

lawmaker,

Snyder, has

large coal

mines in her

district of

Greene County

and she

remembers

what it was

like when

FirstEnergy

shut down its

coal-fired

plant there last

decade.

"I know the

devastation

that caused to

the people, my

neighbors, my

friends,"

Snyder, a

Democrat,

said. "Let me

be clear: I care

deeply about

the

environment,

contrary to

what some

people may

believe. But I

also care about

the

socioeconomic

Snyder said the

Ofreeynel i Storicatt.ÿ

coal mines

serve to bolster

American

energy

independence.

"We need

everything in

this

commonwealth

and in this

country to be

energy

independent,"

Snyder said.

"We need solar.

We need wind

We need

nuclear. We

need gas and,

whether you

believe it or

not, we need

coal. When you

have an energy

emergency,

you're going to

wish you had

coal, because

that's the fuel

that can ramp

up and ramp

-P 4114 14111

down

immediately."

But other

Democrats on

the committee

pushed back on

Struzzi's

contention that

there hadn't

been enough

public

comment and

criticized the

reason for the

bill.

"This bill has

one intent in

my view, and

that is to kill

RGGI, to block

RGGI," said

Democratic

Chair Greg

Vitali,

D-Delaware

County. "And

it's also their

opinion we

need to act

quickly and

deliberately to

address it."

RGGI "will save

jobs and will

create jobs,"

Vitali said. He

noted that the

Beaver Valley

Nuclear

Station, owned

by Energy

Harbor,

remained open

in the face of a

threatened closure because of the prospect of RGGI's focus on clean energy generation.

State Rep.
Dianne Herrin,
D-Chester
County, said
RGGI wasn't
killing the coal
industry.

"The main driver behind the loss of coal jobs is natural gas," Herrin said. "Natural gas is incredibly cheap because there is such a surplus and it is by far the largest build (of power plants) at the utility level."

State Rep. Tim O'Neal, D-Washington County, and state Rep. Josh Kail, R-Beaver

County, said

jobs would be

lost in western

Pennsylvania

without any

attendant drop

in air pollution

because the

fossil fuel

generation

would just be

picked up by

Ohio and West

Virginia. Kail

said the state

shouldn't pick

winners and

losers in an

industry, and

doubted

western

Pennsylvania

wouldn't

benefit

economically "The bottom from RGGI. line is that

what people

are really

talking about

are jobs being

created

somewhere

else, jobs

probably in

another

country," Kail

said. "They

are not going

to be jobs in

my district,
they are not
going to be
jobs in
western
Pennsylvania,
they are not
going to be
jobs in Rep.
Struzzi's
district."

RELATED Advocates CONTENTsay RGGI needed to energize Pennsylvania economy



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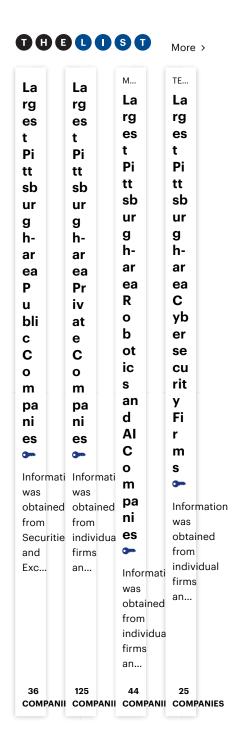
Advocates say PA needs to join Regional



Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

RGGI advocates, opponents line up for battle in Pennsylvania





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