



STATE OF ALABAMA

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

ENVIRONMENTAL EXTREMISTS THREATEN ALABAMA'S ECONOMY AND ABILITY TO COMPETE

By President Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh and Commissioner Jeremy H. Oden

Just in time for Christmas, Alabama faces a threat from a liberal special interest whose agenda-driven actions threaten our ability to remain competitive with other states and bring new jobs and opportunities for our citizens. You don't have to worry about them leaving coal in your stocking – because they oppose the use of coal – but you do have to worry about the higher utility rates and increased energy costs they want to leave under your family's tree.

We are referring to environmental extremist groups that have recently stepped up their activities within our state.

For years, environmental extremists have waged a full frontal attack on coal-based energy production, which happens to comprise a large portion of production in Alabama and directly provides more than 5,000 jobs across our state. While their efforts in our state have been rebuffed time and time again, Barack Obama's election and subsequent re-election as president has emboldened them and caused them to redouble their assault. Environmental extremists also feel they have found a strong ally in Obama's rogue Environmental Protection Agency, which has indicated its willingness to end run Congress and enact controversial regulations.

These environmental groups will use any tool at their disposal, including flawed, junk science studies, biased media reports and simple misdirection with other sideline issues in order to achieve their goals.

If Alabama is to continue its two decades of success in recruiting highly-sought international companies and manufacturing mega-projects to the state, our energy costs must remain affordable and its production must be dependable. Both of those factors depend upon the continuation of coal-based energy production.

When Alabama won a \$5 billion ThyssenKrupp steel manufacturing facility, Gov. Kathleen Blanco, who was in office at the time, credited her state's loss to our ability to meet the plant's massive energy needs more inexpensively than our sister southeastern state. And there's no doubt whatsoever that our comparatively low energy costs have given us an incredible industrial recruitment edge over states throughout the Industrial Northeast and the Rust Belt regions.

Both of us have committed to making the Public Service Commission a needed and effective tool in Alabama's economic development tool belt, and that commitment includes opposing any unnecessary roadblocks, irritants and sideshows that environmental groups may use to dampen our energy production abilities or increase utility costs for businesses and families.

Alabama's energy rates remained unchanged during 2012, and just two weeks ago, the Commission voted to keep utility costs stable throughout 2013, as well, but the electricity bills you pay could soon skyrocket if the environmental extremists have their way.

These groups will likely point to us, as conservative Republicans, and say members of our Party don't care about clean air and water, but that claim is preposterous. Of course, Republicans care deeply about preserving a stable and healthy natural environment for future generations, but we also care about having a stable and healthy economic environment that grows jobs, breeds opportunity and provides employment for those same generations yet to come.

The environmental groups are accountable only to the liberal extremists who fund them, but the members of the Public Service Commission are accountable to the citizens who elected us and depend upon us to represent their interests while ensuring their needs are met. We assure you that we are up to the task at hand.

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