

Message from the Governor

Of all the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me as Governor, none is greater than my obligation to protect the health and well-being of the people of Kansas. And that is why I supported the decision of the Secretary of Kansas Department of Health and Environment regarding Kansas' energy future. For that reason, I must veto House Substitute for SB 327.

This decision not only preserves Kansans' health and upholds our moral obligation to be good stewards of this beautiful land, but will also enhance our prospects for strong and sustainable economic growth throughout our state. Instead of building two new coal plants, which would produce 11 million new tons of carbon dioxide each year, I support pursuing other, more promising energy and economic development alternatives.

With the increasing pressure for the federal government to develop national standards for carbon emissions, there is a high probability coal will become a lot more expensive in the next several years. Countries throughout Europe and South America already have standards in place and states are following suit.

Federal legislation has been introduced that would have the net impact of taxing carbon. If any of the proposals are adopted, utility companies and their customers will pay far more for energy which produces carbon. It will also require spending billions on equipment to clean the atmosphere as thoroughly as possible. Building additional coal plants now is likely to create a significant economic liability for Kansas in the future.

My environmental and financial concerns surrounding the massive new coal-fired power plants allowed under SB 327 have not changed throughout this process. This bill goes well beyond this specific project by stripping emergency powers from the KDHE Secretary and prohibiting the consideration of any standards beyond the Clean Air Act.

It not only mandates 11 million tons of new carbon for power we don't need, but invites other coal plants to be sited in Kansas while eliminating any requirements to mitigate their environmental and health risks for our citizens.

I am encouraged that the legislature made a modest attempt to address some of our alternative energy assets, but this bill fails to promote our wind assets and sends the wrong signal to potential investors for transmission lines and additional wind power.

The new feature of net-metering does not include wind power, which could have served as a powerful incentive to individuals and communities to embrace our most abundant natural resource.

And, the renewable standard and timetable in this bill slows down the progress we have already made, and dilutes the voluntary agreement now in place with utility companies in Kansas.

This legislation proposes a committee to discuss electric generation. I believe we need a comprehensive discussion on energy policy, including but not limited to electric generation, which is why I am now issuing an Executive Order creating the Kansas Energy and Environmental Policy Advisory Group.

My offer of a compromise energy proposal, with additional base load power for Western Kansas, combined with mitigation strategies and additional wind power is once again extended, and I am hopeful that some serious consideration can now occur.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 14 of the Constitution of the State of Kansas, I veto House Substitute for Senate Bill 327.

Vetoed: March 21, 2008

Signed: Kathleen Sebelius, Governor