

"In Southern Missouri, we have a laundry list of reasons to worry about the expansion of power at the Environmental Protection Agency. This federal entity's mission has dramatically expanded in the last two years, adding to its public health missions the ability to press forward policy agendas which Congress has not approved.

Too often, these policy initiatives disproportionately affect rural America and our agricultural and manufacturing sectors of the economy.

Chief among these is cap-and-trade, the expansion of taxes and surcharges on the production of energy sources ranging from coal-fired electricity to the fuel we use in our cars and trucks. Despite the lack of political will in Congress to pass cap-and-trade, the EPA is pushing ahead to establish carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas which is hazardous to human health, clearing the way for restrictions on energy production and increasing prices for nearly every kind of fuel we use in Missouri.

Yet cap-and-trade is only one of the concerning initiatives of the EPA. The latest EPA overreach has Southern Missouri schools, cities and small businesses backing off plans to convert coal-fired boilers to biomass, at a 90 percent savings in emissions. A new EPA rule will no longer recognize woody biomass - the waste wood cleared from our plentiful forests as part of good land management or through the forest products industry - as a renewable fuel.

Just when opportunities to efficiently use fuel from our forests are coming to market, the EPA ruling will stifle attempts in forest-rich areas like Southern Missouri to take advantage of clean-burning, high-efficiency renewable fuels. The main criticism is that establishing a new use for forestry by-products (the waste-wood from companies that make cabinetry or telephone poles) and wood cleared as part of proper forest management, will spark a swath of destruction as forests throughout the country are cut down for fuel. That extreme scenario is not going to happen.

EPA's rule is a twin killing which would both stop the development of low-emission domestic energy production in rural America and encourage the waste of forest by-products. Not even the European Union, home to cap-and-trade, is so arcane and cynical in its environmental regulation as to exclude biomass. But the U.S. EPA is uninterested in innovation and practical energy solutions, unless they take the form of windmills, solar panels or giant kites to harness high-altitude winds.

Obviously, these energy innovations will not produce the cost-effective energy necessary to power our rural economy. Like cap-and-trade, the policy decisions being made at the EPA on biomass will cost Missouri jobs, income and economic activity.

In rural America, our own energy innovations will come from the resources which surround us. As we seek more sources of renewable energy in rural America, we must also be mindful that the federal government, this administration and some in Congress have a clear agenda against them. It will take a tremendous effort of education and advocacy to reverse this dangerous

course, but we in Missouri are up to the task."