

For years, the Environmental Protection Agency has been striving to expand its regulatory reach, issuing standards and making rules for everything it can think of. But just recently the Obama Administration forced the agency to take a step backwards in the implementation of onerous attainment standards for ozone levels in the atmosphere.

The ozone rules, about to go into effect, would have defined four counties in the Eighth Congressional District to be in non-attainment status, meaning that the levels of ozone were too high. In other words, the EPA thinks Southern Missouri has a smog problem.

Wisely, the Obama Administration stepped in and prevented the rulings from taking effect. Before giving them too much credit for their commonsense, however, consider the reason the Administration tugged on the reins of the runaway EPA just this once. Rather than expose the ridiculous nature of the regulations the EPA is writing, the president sought only to delay their implementation, mainly so other, less-obvious rules can continue to move forward.

The ozone regulations are something the extreme environmental community doesn't want the American public to hear much about. They are so far beyond reason, so adversarial to jobs and our economy, so arbitrary as to discredit the entire movement perhaps beyond repair.

The ozone regulations would have placed portions of Yellowstone National Park in violation of the EPA's standards, in addition to affecting 85 percent of counties in the nation. Boilers in thousands of schools, hospitals, office buildings and churches would have been affected by the rule – treating those facilities in our own communities just like the EPA treats industrial polluters. And in extreme cases the rule would have forced the destruction of a building for the construction of each new building in a county out of favor with the EPA.

Clearly, these effects are beyond the pale of the powers of the federal government over our states, counties and cities. It is completely absurd for the federal government of the United States to promote rules and regulations that essentially target not just the energy infrastructure of the nation, but also the small businesses and community institutions that account for the bulk of our economic activity and jobs.

The major argument for controlling the size and scope of the federal government is not to make a political point, it's not even to reduce our national debt, as important as that is. The primary reason to limit our federal government is to free our economy from ridiculous, burdensome, antagonistic regulations that remove authority, jobs and prosperity from local communities now and in the future.

Slowing the enactment of these regulations is no great credit to the Obama Administration, instead it should serve as a warning sign that the federal bureaucracy is making policies, right now, which are incredibly damaging to our communities. Not only is this kind of regulation tone deaf and out of touch, it also runs contrary to the promises politicians make to turn our economy around and to restore our position as an unchallenged global leader – in industry, in prosperity, in freedom... and in common sense.