

5. REGARDING THE CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) REGULATIONS

BACKGROUND

The Southern states have abundant natural resources that have contributed to economic growth and development throughout the region. Having a diverse and balanced mix of electricity sources that include coal, natural gas, nuclear power and renewable energy is vital to economic growth in the Southern region. At the end of 2015, the owners of coal-fired power plants in the 15 member states of the Southern Legislative Conference announced the closure of 175 coal-fired electric generating units.

These closures are primarily due to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations. More EPA regulations are likely to be imposed on coal-fired power plants in the future. These EPA regulations include, but are not limited to, new ambient air quality standards for ozone, fine particles and sulfur dioxide; new rules addressing interstate transport of air pollutants; ongoing regional haze requirements; new requirements for coal combustion residuals; and new effluent limitation guidelines.

These future EPA regulations do not analyze, take into consideration, or seek to minimize the cumulative impacts of its future regulations and are likely to cause the closure of more coal-fired electric generating units, causing a less diverse electricity mix, higher electricity prices, and economic harm to Southern states that depend on coal for jobs and for reliable and affordably priced electricity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments calls on the EPA to analyze the cumulative impacts of its future regulations for coal-fired power plants and urges the EPA to minimize such cumulative impacts as it develops each individual regulation.

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments calls on the U.S. Congress to take all necessary steps, particularly adhering to Section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act which forces the EPA to acknowledge any and all cumulative job loss impacts associated with each rule, to ensure that the EPA conducts such analysis and uses such analysis to minimize the impacts of future regulations for coal-fired power plants.

Furthermore, the Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments requests that a copy of this policy be forwarded to the administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Southern Congressional delegation, and the presiding officers of the member states.