

Real monsters didn't disappear after Halloween

Energy-depriving, job-killing, income-squeezing regulations have a frightening impact

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Halloween is over. The “scary” costumes are packed away. The monster/slasher movie extravaganza has concluded. All that remains are several weeks of sugar highs.

But as winter sets in, America faces real monsters: government regulations that stifle energy production, increase energy prices, kill jobs, squeeze family and business incomes, and threaten living standards and productivity.

Millions of poor, black, Latino and elderly Americans will bear the brunt of rising energy costs. Even middle class families will have to decide whether to heat their homes or buy groceries or medicine.

A recent *USA Today* story revealed how our sluggish economy has impacted families and communities. “Across the nation, the middle class share of the nation’s income is shrinking,” the article stated. “The vast middle class has less of the pie than it had before,” it continued, quoting Pew Research Center Executive Vice President Paul Taylor.

In Reno, Nevada, the paper noted, unemployment jumped from 4 percent in 2006 to 14 percent last year. Empty storefronts and rows of home-for-sale signs are commonplace.

USA TODAY also mentioned New Bern, North Carolina, where most middle class residents are retirees living on investments and fixed incomes. Plummeting portfolio values have forced many of them to look for work in an market where the trucking and boat and appliance manufacturing base has been battered.

What *USA Today* did not do was analyze the depressing problem.

In the case of Nevada, it could have observed that the federal government owns 85 percent of the state. Once managed under “multiple use” principles that allow mining, drilling, timber cutting, and even grazing, snowmobiles and vehicles in many areas, it is now ruled with little but environmental preservation in mind. Multiple use activities are highly restricted or banned, and few business and employment opportunities remain.

President Obama didn't help either state when he said, “When times are tough, you don't blow a bunch of cash on Vegas. You don't go buying a boat.” In the wake of that remark, many singles, families and companies took their vacations and conventions somewhere other than Nevada, further increasing unemployment. Combined with his stated intention to raise taxes on wealthy (boat and appliance buying) families, the President didn't help New Bern, either.

The ongoing legislative and regulatory binge has kept businesses and investors on the sidelines, stifling economic recovery. Actions on energy have been especially damaging, because reliable, affordable energy is the key to living standards, jobs, and everything we make, ship, eat and do.

Yet, the Interior Department and Environmental Protection Agency are locking up more oil, gas and coal prospects; delaying or denying onshore and offshore drilling permits; and imposing countless costly regulations on electricity generation that is the backbone of affordable energy for factories, workers and families. Despite the Solyndra, SunPower and Fisker scandals, the Energy Department spent billions more to subsidize expensive, intermittent green energy.

When the Democrat-controlled senate wouldn't pass cap-tax-and-trade, President Obama said he would go around Congress and impose more rules on his own. EPA then decreed that carbon dioxide is a dangerous, climate altering pollutant. However, CO2 is essential to life on Earth: we exhale it and plants absorb it. The decision will adversely affect factories, power plants, refineries and numerous other facilities, costing hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

EPA's ultra-expensive ozone rules could affect 85% of all US counties. Its Maximum Achievable Control Technology rules for power plants, cement kilns and other facilities will cost still more jobs.

EPA insists its rules will improve health and environmental quality. But as a report posted at www.AffordablePowerAlliance.com explains, there is no medical or scientific basis for most of these claims. The agency needs to consider how its policies will affect energy and reliability, business and family energy bills, jobs, and people's health and welfare.

EPA and other agencies recently postponed some of their most costly regulations. After the 2012 elections, however, many will likely be back. Going down this road will bring to America what "green" energy policies, mandates, taxes and tariffs have inflicted on Britain.

Energy prices in the UK have skyrocketed. One-fifth of all British households are in "fuel poverty," spending over 10 percent of their total incomes on gasoline and heating. Millions of workers have lost their jobs, or will soon, as energy-intensive companies lay people off, close their doors or outsource operations to China and India. A recent government-commissioned report concluded that 2,700 people will die this winter, because they cannot afford to heat their homes properly.

Poor and middle class Americans deserve a better future.

Government must stop transferring money from productive sectors to green theory capitalists – and fostering excessive legislation, taxation, regulation and litigation. It must promulgate sensible laws and regulations, to protect citizens, consumers and our environment from the unscrupulous, while allowing businesses and markets to operate more freely and profitably.

"Going green" must turn the corner from a marketing philosophy that does not carry its own weight, to a process that involves real data and considers the impact on poor and minority families.

That is how we can transform a monstrous "green" government into a facilitator of sustainable jobs, growth and revenue.

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