

BILL DALEY PREPARING TO RUIN ANOTHER DEMOCRAT'S ELECTION CHANCES

The environmental community is beginning to worry that the Obama Administration is preparing to cave on greenhouse gas emissions, just like it did on ozone emissions.

Hard on the heels of the Obama administration's decision earlier this month to scrap a new rule for ozone emissions, U.S. EPA appears poised to miss another major regulatory deadline – this time for greenhouse gas emissions.

Environmentalists are reserving judgment about the fact the agency has yet to send its proposed rule for greenhouse gas emissions from utilities to the White House Office of Management and Budget for vetting, a necessary final step before the rule can be released in compliance with the court-ordered deadline of Sept. 30.

But conservationists warn that if the administration delays another important rule for apparently political reasons, it will face stiff opposition from its sometime-allies in the green community.

"It's starting to look as if EPA might blow another deadline," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch. "That would be very disturbing."

That's particularly troubling given what we've learned about the ozone cave. We know the Business Roundtable wrote Bill Daley personally with their exaggerated claims about the ozone rules. And when environmental groups responded by emphasizing how popular clean air is, Daley ignored them—only to respond when those same business groups implied ozone regulations would

be unpopular in swing states. (h/t David Roberts)

On Aug. 16, Mr. Daley met with environmental, public-health and other groups to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency rule that would tighten air-quality standards. At one point he lamented that the issue couldn't be worked out by consensus with industry, as the White House did with the auto industry on fuel-economy rules.

When the American Lung Association mentioned a poll showing public support for EPA standards, Mr. Daley appeared uninterested, according to one person in the room. "He literally cut the person off and said 'I don't give a [expletive] about the poll,'" this person said. A senior White House official said Mr. Daley wanted to hear arguments about the substance of the regulation and its impact, not political arguments, and he was uninterested in all polls on this topic.

The same day, Mr. Daley met with industry groups, who gave the White House a map showing counties that would be out of compliance with the Clean Air Act if the stricter standards were put in place. The map showed that the rule would affect areas in the politically important 2012 election states of Florida, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Ohio.

And now the Business Roundtable speaks openly about maintaining that kind of influence over these decisions.

"We saw that as a positive – his level of interest, him sitting in on these meetings, him weighing in on this issue within the administration," Johanna Schneider, executive director of external relations for the Business Roundtable, told The Hill. "I think it's emblematic of his role in the administration as part of the outreach to

the business community.”

[snip]

“It moved the issue up to the top of the agenda for the president. That is what happens when you have a White House chief of staff getting involved,” Schneider said.

“You have one of the two or three people in government who can control the agenda.”

American Petroleum Institute President Jack Gerard said he’s hopeful the ozone decision foreshadows increased White House involvement in rulemakings.

“We are hopeful that all decisions will be scrutinized as closely as the ozone decision, because a lot of regulatory overreach is what creates the uncertainty that keeps the investment money on the sidelines,” Gerard said in an interview.

Now maybe it’s true that insisting that businesses not poison our children would be political unpopular in key swing states—or maybe not.

The point is, these decisions are being made for political reasons. And the person making those decisions appears to be Bill Daley (helped by Cass Sunstein).

You know. Bill Daley? The guy who couldn’t get Al Gore elected at a time of historical prosperity (even if it was a bubble)? The guy who pushed decisions like separation from a popular president and caving on the FL recount that led directly to Gore being unsuccessful at pressing his victory?

Maybe the White House is right to make bad environmental decisions for pragmatic political reasons (though I doubt it). But Bill Daley is probably not the guy you want making that call, because he has a pretty remarkable history of poor political judgment.