

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

February 22, 2011 at 10:13am

Sierra Club warns: 'Biggest assault on the EPA in history'

by Ngoc Nguyen by New American Media



Carl Pope (Image courtesy of the Sierra Club)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has emerged as a punching bag for members of the Republican-led House of Representatives. The House wants to slash the agency's budget and some conservative lawmakers even want to abolish it.

The politicians and some businesses say environmental regulation is stifling the country's economy. Ngoc Nguyen with New America Media recently interviewed Carl Pope, executive chairman of the Sierra Club, about what's behind the attack on the EPA. Following is their conversation.

NAM: What's happening with current efforts to undermine the EPA that people should be aware of?

The bad economy doesn't appear to have dampened public support for the EPA or the environment, but there's a perception that regulation causes job losses. Is that what's happening?

If you build a new power plant, you have a lot more jobs. If you take a refinery, and let it run dirty, you don't need as many maintenance [workers], so cleaning up the refinery increases the workforce. Cleaning up pollution creates jobs; it doesn't cost jobs, and we've proved that over and over again.

As national legislation to tackle climate change has gone nowhere, the EPA is now at the center of efforts to regulate greenhouse gases that cause global warming as well. Why?

A huge amount of carbon pollution comes from burning coal, and coal is mostly burned in outmoded power plants that also release sulfur, mercury, soot, nitrogen and coal ash. It turns out that the coal industry and allies of the coal industry, they don't want to clean up carbon pollution or any pollution.

The plants are old and outmoded, so cleaning them up is good for public health, good for people who live close to the plant, and good for the climatic future. The solution to carbon pollution is the solution to the climate problem, and the EPA is on the front lines of both those battles.

[To see the original posting of this interview, see New America Media's story: Sierra Club Head Warns: "Biggest Assault on the EPA in U.S. History".]

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