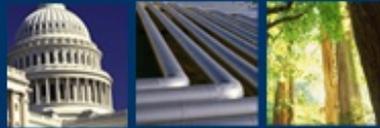




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POLICY:

Mo., other states developing plans to shape energy futures outside EPA regs

Jeffrey Tomich, E&E reporter

EnergyWire: Monday, September 29, 2014

Missouri is in the early stages of its most comprehensive energy planning effort in at least two decades. And it has nothing to do with U.S. EPA's proposal to regulate carbon dioxide emissions.

To be sure, the Obama administration's proposed carbon rule will also command a lot of attention in the coal-dependent Show Me State and will weigh heavily in the conversation. But Missouri's energy plan, a product of executive order by Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon, will look more broadly at the state's energy mix, prices and ways to use energy to create jobs.

"It covers a lot more than electric generation," said Lewis Mills, appointed by Nixon in the spring to lead the state's energy office and the planning effort. "But electric

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generation is a big part of the picture."

Overall, more than three dozen states have developed energy plans or are in the process of doing so, according to the Arlington, Va.-based National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO). Missouri is among more than a dozen states developing plans or revamping existing ones to use as road maps.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett (R) released a plan in January. New York issued a draft of its plan in January that's drawn national attention. Colorado issued a plan earlier this year. Other states including Indiana are still in the midst of developing new or revised plans.

Melissa Savage, NASEO senior program director, said more states have embraced energy plans and developed more comprehensive ones over the past decade as they respond to seismic changes in the energy industry, from the scale-up of renewables to a surge in domestic petroleum production to declining demand.

Knowing the importance of energy prices and policies to local economies, states have also stepped up in response to a lack of comprehensive federal policy, Savage said.

"Many of these states were or have been taking the lead in the absence of any federal action," she said.

While EPA's proposal isn't driving state planning efforts, it will certainly play a part in state energy plans moving forward. That's especially true given the flexibility provided to states for how they reduce the carbon intensity of their electric generation sectors.

The carbon proposal, expected to be finalized next summer, requires a 30 percent cut nationwide by 2030. But requirements vary by state, and the rule would provide a lot of latitude on how to achieve the reductions.

Like reactions to EPA's proposed carbon rule, energy plans vary widely and can depend heavily on a state's natural resources, demographics and, of course, politics.

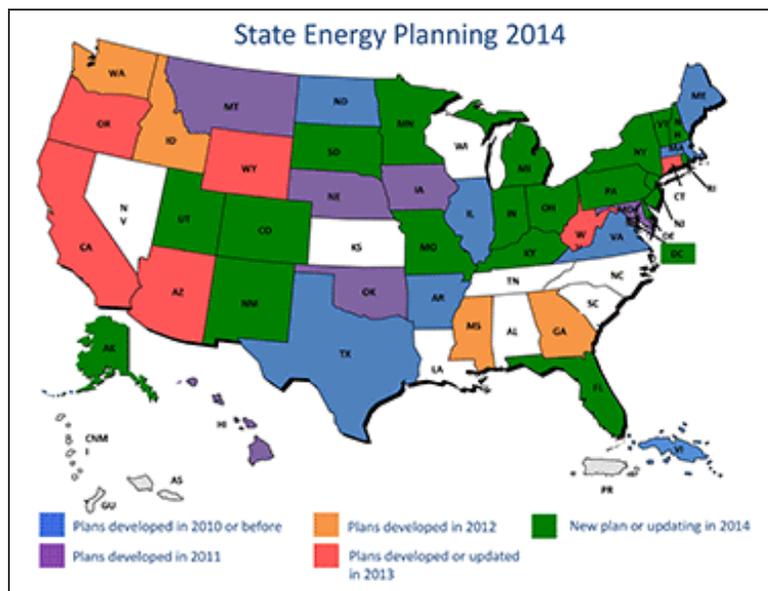
They can range from a handful of pages to hundreds. Some emphasize economic development and job creation. Others lean toward environmental goals such as addressing climate change or improving air and water quality.

Universally, however, all plans aim to ensure consumers have access to clean, affordable and abundant energy.

How do you measure success?

Are state energy plans worth the effort? Logic would say the answer is yes. Just as a family with a budget and financial planner will generally do a better job managing money than neighbors who doesn't bother to balance

their checkbook, states with energy plans are considered to be better off than those without.



More than a dozen states are developing or revising state energy plans this year. Map courtesy of NASEO.

But measuring the results of energy plans isn't easy. Commodities such as crude oil and natural gas are traded globally. Electricity is moved around regionally. And no matter how much a state wants to tap into the shale gas boom, if the geology isn't there, it won't happen.

The Missouri Energy Initiative, a nonprofit created to promote dialogue on state energy issues, released a **report** this month that attempts to quantify the benefits of energy plans by showing a link to economic resilience and energy prices.

Josh Campbell, executive director of the group, acknowledges that, at best, the relationship is unclear.

Among the challenges of evaluating the effectiveness of state energy plans is the fact that the documents, no matter how comprehensive, are just plans.

Plans ordered by one governor can be ignored by his or her successor. Commonly, broad policy goals require action by legislatures that may or may not agree with the conclusions.

Increasingly, state officials who oversee development of the plans have recognized that and are baking in measures to track the progress, Savage said.

Acting on plans

Campbell sees it as important for Missouri to develop more specific "action items" in its plan to ensure it's put to good use.

"If it's just policy goals, it's just something that's going to be put on a shelf," he said. "We've got about a dozen of those already in Missouri."

Mills, who was named to lead the effort earlier this year, agrees that the energy plan will have much more value

if acted on. But there are no guarantees the General Assembly or Public Service Commission will follow through with any recommendations.

"That's the \$64,000 question," Mills said. If the plan isn't put to use, "it's not entirely a wasted effort, but it's not as useful as it could have been."

Mills said Missouri's planning process will include a series of public meetings across the state next month, and the plan will be developed with help from a 50-member steering committee that represents a broad cross-section of leaders representing different interests across Missouri.

Public input and participation, he said, is one way to improve the odds that the plan gets results. Also, the plan will be available online and the public will be able to hold state leaders accountable.

Mills said: "They can call us on it."

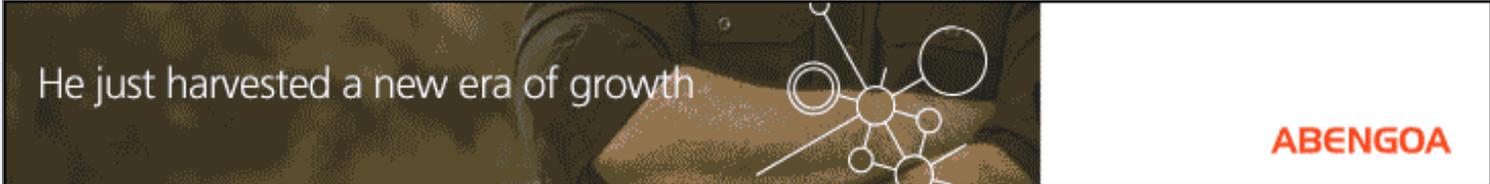
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