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EPA Faces Legal Limits In Bid To Expand Fracking Oversight . . . NRDC Framework Could Help 2013 Bid To Regulate Existing Facilities' GHGs . . . Tank Corrosion Study Highlights Debate Over RFS . . . Cost-Benefit Advocates Seek Greater DOE Oversight Of Agencies' Energy Rules . . . At Debate, Obama, Romney Outline Competing Energy Policies. . . **More on these and other developments below:**

Cost-Benefit Advocates Call For Greater DOE Oversight Of Agencies' Rules

A group that advocates for strict cost-benefit analysis of regulations is urging the Obama administration to launch a process giving the Department of Energy (DOE) significant new oversight power on all rules under development by EPA and other federal agencies if the regulations would significantly affect energy production and conservation. The comments could hint at efforts to sharpen regulatory review of environmental rules affecting energy production following Republican efforts in the 112th Congress to stop what critics say is EPA's "war on coal" with air, waste, water and other regulations that they warn will shutter coal-fired utilities, harming the economy and grid.

"Despite the clear mission and objective of DOE, our national energy policy still remains fragmented across many agencies," says the Center for Regulatory Effectiveness (CRE) in recent comments to DOE. The group suggests DOE should have an elevated formal role in the White House Office of Management & Budget (OMB) pre-publication review of agencies' rules in order to bolster a federal energy strategy and also reduce regulatory burdens. CRE's comments are in response to an Aug. 8 DOE request for information on reducing regulatory burdens, similar to EPA's ongoing effort to identify rules to streamline or overhaul to reduce burdens on industries.

Meanwhile, energy efficiency proponents say in a new report that coal-fired power plant shutdowns due to EPA air toxics rules or low natural gas prices in almost a dozen states could provide a major boost for combined heat and power (CHP) as a replacement power source, which they say could offset the need to construct new coal, natural gas, or nuclear power plants.

The claim -- in a recent report by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy -- comes as the Obama administration is trying to bolster the role of CHP as an energy source. CHP uses the waste heat and gas of manufacturing processes to produce electricity for industrial purposes and to sell to the grid. The resource is seen as a cost-effective means of developing new, cleaner power resources as opposed to building new power plants.

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