

A recent guest editorial missed the mark on the green energy debate in Washington and the harmful effect rigid standards would have on Georgia ("If sun rises, state can meet renewable energy mandate," March 10).

I testified before Congress because I believe the carbon cap and trade system and mandated renewable portfolio standards will disproportionately hurt ratepayers in Georgia, especially low income households.

Hopefully by now everyday Americans have come to realize they will in fact pay higher taxes under this Administration; unless of course they do not work in a small business, have a mortgage, health benefits, use gasoline or electricity, contribute to charities, or buy goods and services.

The campaign rhetoric sounded righteous to the uninformed; let's tax polluters and use the revenue to develop renewable sources. But the "polluters" President Obama speaks of includes your local electric company. And when utilities get hit with this carbon tax, they are legally permitted to recover it from customers. As businesses buy credits for the emissions they produce, consumers will get pinched again when they purchase goods.

Lower income earners will be impacted more because utility bills and other necessities, such as groceries, represent a higher percentage of their income. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), a 15% cut in emissions would cost the average low income family \$680.00 each year. The CBO estimates \$50 to \$300 billion a year would be collected; an unspecified amount pledged to offset the higher energy bills of lower income families.

Here in the southeast the inequities of a one-size fits all federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) will be felt even greater. Like twenty-five other states, Georgia receives 50% or more of its energy generation from coal. If RPS legislation is limited to wind, solar, biomass or geothermal, Georgia's electricity costs will go up, reliability will be jeopardized, and capital will be diverted from achieving other objectives, like meeting aggressive carbon targets.

While we can grow our use of renewables in Georgia, we cannot come close to meeting the mandates under considered by Congress. According to Department of Energy data, Georgia does not have abundant solar energy like that in the Desert Southwest, the wind turbine generation available in the Great Plains, nor abundant geothermal. While I support expansion of solar energy at the micro level, Georgia's humidity and low cloud cover make it a very unlikely, not to mention high cost, source for substantial production in Georgia, even when considering federal production tax credits.

Limited potential does exist for wind generation off the coast, which Georgia Power Company is exploring in consultation with Georgia Tech. Landfill methane gas is being used to generate energy across the state. Our extensive pine forests are being used for biomass generation. Georgia Power is in the process of converting a 155 megawatt coal plant to biomass. Oglethorpe Power has announced three 100 megawatt biomass plants. Though these plants will be among the largest in the country, they will not put a dent in the proposed requirement that 25% of new electric generation come from renewables by 2021.

Regional considerations should be included in any federal standard. Existing hydro-generation should be given the same credit as wind and solar. Emission-free nuclear generation and use of coal with carbon capture and sequestration should count towards compliance. The definition of biomass should be expanded to include whole trees. Without this flexibility, a huge transfer of wealth will flow from Georgia to developers or utilities in other parts of the country, or to Washington, and working Georgia families will feel the pain of these lofty goals the most.

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(Wise's full testimony can be found under Commissioner's Views at [www.psc.state.ga.us](http://www.psc.state.ga.us).)