



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 9, 2015

Bloomberg Pledges \$30 Million More to Anti-coal Campaign

Billionaire Michael Bloomberg (shown) pledged \$30 million Wednesday to the Sierra Club's war on coal, boosting to \$110 million the amount the former New York mayor and his allies are contributing to the environmentalist group's efforts to shut down coal plants all across the country.

While his reported \$50 million campaign for gun control has had a negligible effect, Bloomberg has reason to hope his latest effort in philanthropic activism will produce more results. With an effort spanning 45 states, the Sierra Club claims credit for the demise of 188 coal plants whose owners have announced plans to close or repurpose them since 2010, [Politico reported](#). The "Beyond Coal" campaign threatens the survival of an energy-producing industry beset by Environmental Protection Agency regulations and increased competition from wind and natural gas. Some in the industry say Bloomberg and other backers of the campaign are responsible for lost jobs and higher electric bills.



"The Sierra Club today may thank the Bloomberg foundation for an additional \$30 million to fight affordable energy, but families across the country facing higher utility bills won't be so grateful," said a statement issued by National Mining Association President Hal Quinn, warning that anti-coal efforts are already "leaving tens of thousands of Americans without jobs and low-income families plus those on fixed incomes with still higher bills to pay." But another industry spokesman dismissed Bloomberg's cash as so much debris.

"I think of Bloomberg's millions the same way I do the millions Steyer flushed down the toilet last year — flotsam," Laura Sheehan of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity said, referring to the millions San Francisco billionaire and environmentalist crusader Tom Steyer spent last year in mostly unsuccessful efforts to elect candidates committed to government programs to combat alleged man-made climate change.

Bloomberg's \$30 million pledge, in addition to the \$50 million he pledged in 2011, has encouraged the Sierra Club to increase its goals for shutting down the power-producing plants. The new goal is to have half of the nation's coal plants that existed in 2010 on the way to retirement by 2017. The previous goal was to cut the number by a third, [Politico reported](#). Meeting the new goal will mean reducing energy



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produced by coal plants by 88,252 megawatts, in addition to 77,600 megawatts already eliminated, the group said. In a speech to cheering volunteers in Washington on Wednesday, Bloomberg claimed the economic benefits of lower energy costs are outweighed by the health threats posed by pollution from coal plants.

“We need energy, nobody disputes that,” the former mayor said. “The question is: Do we have to kill ourselves while we’re getting it? I don’t think we have to do it, and nor do you.” As a result of coal plant retirements since 2010, there will be 7,500 fewer heart attacks and 80,000 fewer asthma attacks this year, Bloomberg said, while acknowledging the speculative nature of those numbers.

“The unfortunate thing is we don’t know the names of those people who would have died from a heart attack or died from cancer,” he said. “If we could, it would resonate a lot more with the public.”

Power plants being built today emit 90-percent fewer pollutants than the 1970s plants they are replacing, according to a posting on the National Mining Association website, citing a finding by the National Energy Technology Laboratory. Regulated emissions from coal-based electric generation have decreased by 40 percent since the 1970s, the NMA says, even as coal use has tripled during that time.

“There is no reason to celebrate raising costs for society’s most vulnerable,” Quinn said in reference to Bloomberg’s announcement. He continued, “As pending regulations on carbon emissions shutter more power plants, studies have estimated America’s consumers could be paying an additional \$366 billion to \$407 billion. We can expect more of this after today’s announcement and also to be paying the bill for decades.”

Photo of Michael Bloomberg: AP Images



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