

## COLORADO:

**Governor tweaks climate doubters, seeks 'miracle' solution**

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E reporter

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BOULDER, Colo. – When Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell urged governors nationwide to "just say no" to U.S. EPA's new carbon emissions rules earlier this year, Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper (D) offered what he called a "thoughtful" response publicly declining the Republican's suggestion.

Now he admits that he just couldn't help trolling the Kentucky senator.

"It did give me a certain pleasure to write the letter back saying that not only will we work on this but we're going to do it, we're going to do it ahead of schedule, and we will," Hickenlooper said in a speech here at the University of Colorado Law School last night, where he gleefully conceded the missive was intended to rile the opponents of climate change policy.

Although Hickenlooper is locked in a battle with state Attorney General Cynthia Coffman (R) over whether Colorado should be involved in a multistate lawsuit opposing the EPA regulations -- he has asked the state Supreme Court to rule on whether Coffman can join such lawsuits without the governor's direction -- he also vowed that the state will nonetheless meet EPA's new Clean Power Plan regulations, aimed at reducing power-sector carbon emissions ([Greenwire](#), Nov. 6).

"I think that as a country, we're going to continually get cleaner and safer, and all we have in the way to do that is setting rigorous goals through regulatory frameworks that force us collectively to go faster and higher than we would otherwise," Hickenlooper said.

He added: "We're going to do this come hell or high water -- our goal is to be able to get to those clean air goals without increasing our cost of electric generation."

Hickenlooper doubled down on his commitment to the EPA regulations during a question-and-answer session after a brief speech on the future of energy production in the United States.

In the wide-ranging talk -- given as part of the Schultz Lectureship Series, an annual event that focuses on oil and gas, energy and natural resources law -- Hickenlooper touched on his hopes for energy development in the state, which he said must encourage innovation and address climate change.

"In thinking about this lecture, contemplating the sheer scope of what energy means to the world, I briefly considered changing the title of this speech to 'Energy: We're Screwed,'" Hickenlooper joked. "It's daunting when you look at what we're up against: accelerating energy demand globally, antiquated infrastructure and the long periods of time it takes to scale promising but in most cases unproven technologies to a global market -- not to mention a little thing like climate change."

Hickenlooper spoke optimistically about finding an energy production method or new resources that would help to reduce carbon emissions while also addressing increasing global energy needs.

"We need a new energy system that has three basic components: It should be cheaper and more efficient than today's hydrocarbon sources. It should have limited or no carbon emissions. And it should be reliable as today's energy system," Hickenlooper said. "Sounds relatively simple, right? Actually, it would be a miracle to have that ... but it's a miracle that we're going to create."

Hickenlooper went on to praise the expansion of hydraulic fracturing in the nation, pointing to the surge in the nation's natural gas production and its replacement for coal in power generation, but warned against its use as a long-term "bridge fuel" between traditional sources and renewables.

"From an industry perspective, that sounds very promising, but when you think about our long-term energy goals, it doesn't do a lot for climate change. Certainly, replacing coal with natural gas is a giant step, but looking at that miracle, it doesn't deliver us," Hickenlooper said.

Nonetheless, Hickenlooper defended the state's large drilling industry, which has come under criticism from cities in Colorado that have sought to block new wells with moratoriums or outright bans.

The state has joined one of two major lawsuits challenging cities that have sought to curb fracking within their boundaries, and the state Supreme Court agreed in September to hear appeals in both cases after local laws were rejected by lower courts ([EnergyWire](#), Sept. 22).

"The plain and simple answer is this state, in our constitution, has very strong protection for private property of all sorts," Hickenlooper said, arguing that individual mineral owners have the right to extract their resources from the land.

He added that if municipalities had the option of refusing to allow new drilling sites, "every community, if they could, would zone them 10 miles away."

Hickenlooper worked to curb ballot initiatives in the 2014 election that would have allowed communities to restrict fracking within their boundaries, negotiating instead to create an oil and gas task force to address the issue -- although its efforts have been widely panned by both environmentalists and industry representatives.

Colorado voters are expected to potentially see a new round of ballot initiatives tied to the industry in 2016, although Hickenlooper said he doubted any measure would pass.

"I can't imagine it would," he said, adding that any such law would likely be challenged in federal court.

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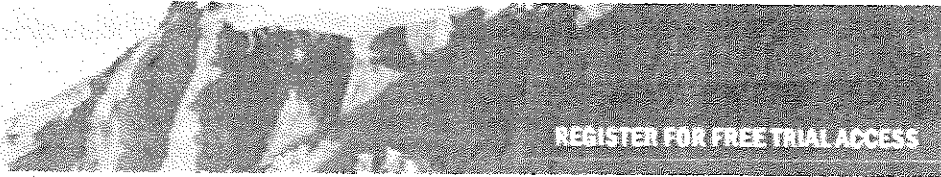
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