

Staten Island Advance

STATEN ISLAND'S MCMAHON RIPS PLAN FOR JERSEY COAL PLANT

By Judy L. Randall, Advance Staff Writer
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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Knocking what he says is the myth of clean coal, Rep. Michael McMahon has called on the Obama administration to nix a proposal to build a coal-fired power plant in Linden, N.J., that would harness carbon emissions to generate electricity, calling it "unproven technology" and an "environmental injustice to the people of Staten Island."

But the mayor of Linden is all for it, telling the Advance, "If we are going to get ourselves off the oil glut, we have to look at alternatives."

What's more, Mayor Richard Gerbounka said he intends to call McMahon to tell him so.

The project -- which would have to go through an extensive permitting process before getting the OK of the New Jersey state Department of Environmental Conservation and the federal government -- is the concept of Massachusetts-based SCS Energy. Its aim is to capture carbon and store it some 70 miles offshore, under the Atlantic Ocean, with the long-range intent of reducing global warming.

The location of the proposed plant is across the Arthur Kill from Staten Island, in what is now a brownfield, said Gerbounka. He said it would mean "major tax revenues" for his city and New Jersey.

The trick is containing the release of carbon into the air -- SCS reportedly estimates it can do so with 90 percent efficiency -- and Gerbounka said he's confident it can be done.

But that's not good enough for McMahon, who has notified U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu of his opposition to the plan.

"As much as people would like to spin it, there is no such thing as clean coal," said McMahon (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn). "The technology ... while innovative and worthy of research, is not suited for America's largest metropolitan area. Taking carbon emissions, piping them 70 miles out to sea and trying to generate electricity with no adverse impact on the environment just will not work. No plan like this has ever been built in the United States, and carbon-capture technology is still in its infancy."

"Even if the plant works as the promoters say it will, 10 percent of carbon will still be released into the air, affecting Staten Island residents and businesses," added McMahon.

Countered Gerbounka: "This is an environmentally friendly way to find alternative fuel sources which could wean us off Middle East oil. It is not an environmental hazard as long as they can sequester the CO2, and they have experts who say they can."

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