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## Gingrich calls for eliminating EPA, expanding domestic energy production

By Andrew Restuccia - 02/10/11 01:38 PM ET

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich called Thursday for abolishing the Environmental Protection Agency and passing energy legislation that expands domestic oil production and streamlines nuclear licensing.

In a wide-ranging speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, Gingrich called for replacing the EPA with an Environmental Solutions Agency that focuses on technology-driven solutions to addressing the country's environmental problems.

Gingrich said the Obama EPA is "made up of self-selected bureaucrats" that are seeking to pass wide-ranging regulations that would harm the economy. Instead, he called for an agency that focused on "science, technology, markets and incentives."

It's not the first time that Gingrich has called for getting rid of the EPA, but it's certainly the most high-profile speech he's delivered on the subject. CPAC is watched closely by conservatives all over the country and Gingrich's recommendations are certain to make waves.

Still, it's unclear whether the recommendation to replace the EPA with a new agency would gain traction among Republicans in Congress, who have been hesitant to endorse such a proposal.

Gingrich also called on lawmakers to pass energy legislation that would expand domestic oil and gas production, arguing that the Obama administration has mounted a "war" on developing the country's fossil fuel resources.

"For thirty years, we've had the worst possible domestic energy policy in energy and it's time we stopped it," he said.

Citing the political unrest in Egypt, Gingrich said it is essential to expand domestic oil- and-gas drilling.

But EPA policy took the brunt of criticism during the potential GOP presidential contender's speech. He proposed allowing states to determine whether to allow drilling off their coasts and pointed to a recent announcement by Shell to scrap drilling plans in Alaska this year, blaming the EPA for imposing too many regulatory burdens on the company.

"The EPA has refused to allow them to move forward, and they announced last week that they're dropping it," he said.

Gingrich also railed against the EPA for vetoing a permit for a major mountaintop-removal coal mine in West Virginia and called for developing technology to reduce the greenhouse gases emitted during coal-fired power production.

Nor should the EPA should not put restrictions on a controversial gas drilling process called hydraulic fracturing, in which chemicals, water and sand are injected into the ground to get access to valuable natural gas reserves, he said.

Gingrich also said the nuclear regulatory process should be streamlined and lawmakers should focus on pushing small reactors that can be constructed quickly.

“There’s a whole new generation of very small nuclear power plants that are very, very safe,” he said.

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