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ESG JANUARY 14, 2019 / 1:05 AM / UPDATED 4 HOURS AGO

President Trump can't stop U.S. coal plants from retiring

Scott DiSavino

4 MIN READ



(Reuters) - More U.S. coal-fired power plants were shut in President Donald Trump's first two years than were retired in the whole of Barack Obama's first term, despite the Republican's efforts to prop up the industry to keep a campaign promise to coal-mining states.

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In total, more than 23,400 megawatts (MW) of coal-fired generation were shut in 2017-2018 versus 14,900 MW in 2009-2012, according to data from Reuters and the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Trump has tried to roll back rules on climate change and the environment adopted during the Obama administration to fulfill pledges to voters in states like West Virginia and Wyoming.

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But the second highest year for coal shutdowns was in Trump's second year, 2018, at around 14,500 megawatts, following a peak at about 17,700 megawatts in 2015 under Obama.

One megawatt can power about 1,000 U.S. homes.

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The number of U.S. coal plants has continued to decline every year since coal capacity peaked at just over 317,400 MW in 2011, and is expected to keep falling as consumers demand power from cleaner and less expensive sources of energy.

Cheap natural gas and the rising use of renewable power like solar and wind have kept electric prices relatively low for years, making it uneconomic for generators to keep investing in older coal and nuclear plants.

Generators said they plan to shut around 8,422 MW of coal-fired power and 1,500 MW of nuclear in 2019, while adding 10,900 MW of wind, 8,200 MW of solar and 7,500 MW of gas, according to Reuters and EIA data.

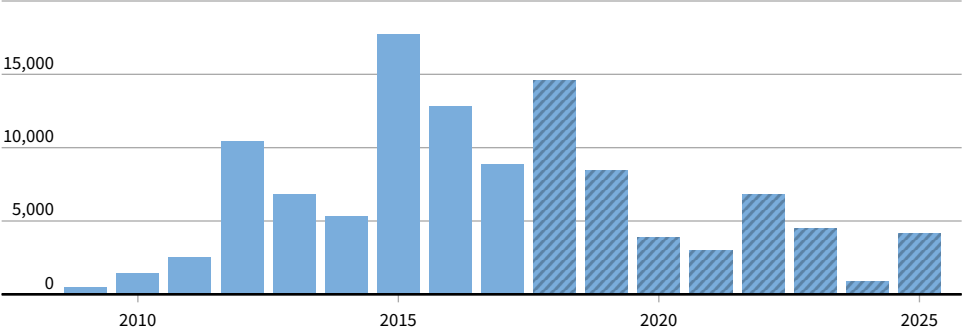
The predictions come from estimates compiled by Thomson Reuters and U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

Trump can't stop U.S. coal plants from retiring

The number of coal plants shut during U.S. President Donald Trump's first two years in office topped all of the units retired during the first five years of the Obama administration. Generators are expected to continue shutting coal plants in the future.

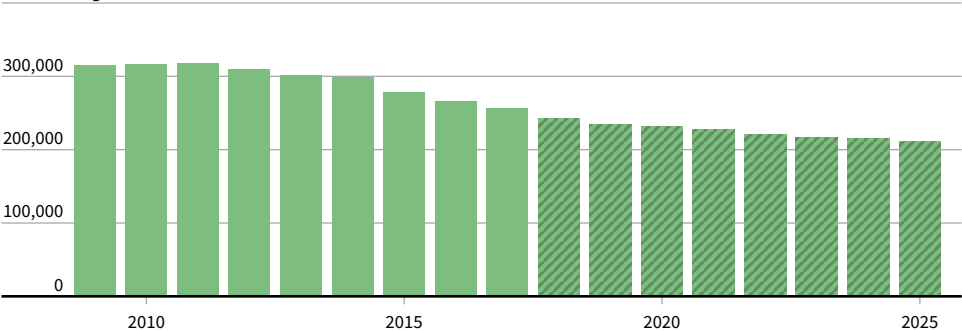
COAL UNITS SHUT

20,000 megawatts of coal units shut



TOTAL COAL UNIT CAPACITY

400,000 megawatts



*2018 through 2025 figures are based on estimates
Source: Thomson Reuters and U.S. Energy Information Administration data
Stephanie Kelly | REUTERS GRAPHICS

Since taking office in January 2017, the Trump administration has announced its intention to leave the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and is relaxing Obama-era rules on emissions from power plants as it seeks to boost domestic production of oil, gas and coal.

U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, spiked in 2018 after falling for the previous three years as cold weather spurred gas demand for heating and the booming economy pushed planes and trucks to guzzle fuel, according to a study by Rhodium Group, an independent research group.

After falling to 5,144 million tonnes in 2017, the lowest since 1992, the EIA projected U.S. energy-related carbon emissions will rise to 5,299 million tonnes in 2018.

U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a "

“There will be a limit to what increasingly cheap renewable power and continuously cheap natural gas can deliver with respect to emissions reductions,” said John Larsen, a director at Rhodium Group who leads the firm’s power sector research, noting the rising use of gas to produce power as coal plants shut. Natural gas emits about half the carbon as coal.

The Trump administration has also tried to slow the retirement of coal and nuclear plants through a directive in 2017 from Energy Secretary Rick Perry to subsidize the aging units because they make the electric grid more resilient.

Massive winter storm claims at least 7 lives

That plan was bashed by advocates for gas, renewable power and consumers and unanimously rejected by the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), led by former Chairman Kevin McIntyre. The plan could resurface now that Trump has a chance to replace McIntyre, who died on Jan. 2.


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Reporting by Scott DiSavino and Stephanie Kelly in New York; Editing by Sonya Hepinstall
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POLITICS JANUARY 14, 2019 / 9:41 AM / UPDATED AN HOUR AGO

Trump rejects senator's proposal for temporary government reopening

2 MIN READ



FILE PHOTO: Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) waits for U.S. President Donald Trump to enter the room to speak about the "First Step Act" in the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington, U.S. November 14, 2018. REUTERS/Leah Millis/File Photo

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday he rejected a proposal from a Republican ally in the Senate that he temporarily reopen closed parts of the government to allow resumption of negotiations on a funding standoff.

As he left the White House for a trip to Louisiana, Trump told reporters he did not agree with Republican Senator Lindsey Graham's proposal to reopen the government for three weeks.

If talks fail during that period, Graham said on Sunday, then Trump could go ahead and declare a national emergency to bypass Congress and get money for a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border - the issue that triggered the shutdown on Dec. 22.

Trump has held out the option of declaring a national emergency if he cannot get a deal with lawmakers. He said on Monday he was not looking to do so.

The federal government has been partially shut over Trump's demand that a spending bill include \$5.7 billion to build a wall along the border with Mexico as he promised during his campaign. Democrats have refused further negotiations until the government is reopened.

Reporting by Jeff Mason; Writing by Doina Chiacu; Editing by Bill Trott

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