

MIRS

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Dillon Tell Power Plant Crowd: 'I Feel Betrayed'

House Speaker Andy **DILLON** (D-Redford Twp.) told a crowd of around 1,500 skilled union tradesmen today that he "feels betrayed" over the state bureaucracy's decision to throw road blocks in the way of two proposed coal-fired plants only weeks after the Legislature passed bills to streamline the process.

The remarks are the furthest the Democratic leader has gone publicly in criticizing Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** administration's decision to require a special feasibility study on all power plant proposals brought before it.

Dillon's one-minute, impromptu address at the Building and Construction Trades Council rally in front of the Capitol, fired up the crowd like no other speaker, according to observers. He wasn't on the agenda. He also left his usually cool and calm demeanor inside the Capitol.

"I feel betrayed. Three years ago, I had a dream to change the rules in this state to allow baseload power plants to get constructed," said a fired-up Dillon. "Our rules were stacked against the utilities so they couldn't build a plant in this state.

"We fought for two years to change these rules and we got bi-partisan support," Dillon continued. "We got support from business, from labor and from environmentalists, and after that day happened, after we put up a very tough vote, six weeks before an election, the bureaucrats stepped in the way and took it out from under us.

"We got to get the bureaucrats to live up to this deal so you can get back to work and we can build baseload in this state. Keep the heat on because we want to build them," he concluded.

During her State of the State address earlier this year, Granholm asked the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conduct an "alternative analysis" on whether there is a specific need for a power plant and whether that need could be filled through alternative sources of energy production.

Under state and federal law, the DEQ has the authority under Director Steve **CHESTER**'s direction to ask for this information from power companies and conduct this special permitting process.

Currently, there are two coal-fired power plants on the drawing board that are waiting for DEQ approval -- Consumer Energy's plant near Bay City and the Wolverine plant near Rogers City.

DEQ Spokesman Bob **MCCANN** said "there is a legal process" the department is following and that a final ruling on both power plants are expected to be released by the end of the

year.

At the rally, Patrick **DEVLIN**, chief executive officers of the Building & Construction Trades Council, said these permits need to be granted and construction of the power plants gotten off the ground for the benefit of his members, who are experiencing a 50 percent unemployment rate.

Since becoming a casualty to the shrinking automobile industry, union tradesmen and tradeswomen have been forced to go out of state to work. Devlin said the alternative energy jobs Granholm is trying to bring into Michigan are few, far between and short in scope.

Putting together wind turbines is a three-month job, at most, that employ only around 100 members of the skilled trades, he said, while building a baseload power plant is a five-year job for 3,000 workers.

A more important point, said David **WAYMIRE** of the Customer Choice Coalition, is that "every man, woman and child" will be footing the bill for these unnecessary projects for years down the line. This comes at a time when Michigan already boasts the Midwest's highest energy costs, which, in itself, chases away jobs.

"What we should be doing -- instead of rallying to support a government-mandated electric rate increase for the benefit of one company -- is rallying to support the opening of competition so the people being gauged by Consumer Energy's sky high rates can save money and save jobs in this state," Waymire said.

Others who spoke at today's rally included Senate Minority Leader Mike **PRUSI** (D-Ishpeming), Sen. Bruce **PATTERSON** (R-Canton), Sen. Randy **RICHARDVILLE** (R-Monroe), House Minority Leader Kevin **ELSENHEIMER** (R-Kewadin), Rep. Jeff **MAYES** (D-Bay City) and Rep. Ken **HORN** (R-Frankenmuth).