

Hugh Hewitt Radio Program
Interview with NAM President John Engler
April 20, 2009

HH: I'm Hugh Hewitt, joined this segment and last by John Engler, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, formerly governor of Michigan for 12 great years when the Wolverine state, except for football, was really a place to watch and model. Now, however, Michigan is on hard times and Governor Engler is down at NAM in D.C. trying to stop the flow of regulations.

Governor, I don't think a lot of people quite grasp what EPA did last week. Do you want to explain to people the ominous nature of that development?

ENGLER: Sure. What the Environmental Protection Agency did is say, well, as a result of a case that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court that said they ought to look at this, they sort of stepped in where Congress at this point has not chosen to go. And they made a finding that it's perhaps important now to regulate carbon dioxide emissions. In other words, they're going to tackle climate change at the EPA.

Now, this is the beginning of a process, but boy, if this doesn't get every American and every worker in this country up in arms. This is the time now to start talking to members of Congress and the Senate.

This debate is taking place in the Congress anyway. But to have a regulatory agency step in and do an end run – they can absolutely defer. President Bush in the last administration said, “No, we're not going to go forward with this.”

Think about this, Hugh. This affects every utility. This affects everybody who has a smokestack coming out their business. It could be their house, too. In Great Britain, 25 percent of the carbon they're going to regulate, carbon emissions, are from homes, residential properties.

So there's no point ... People have been making jokes about cows, animals, and even humans. I mean, we're all carbon producers.

But where this goes and how this starts, this is more than the camel's nose, this is a big part of the camel.

HH: Or the hump. The hump is inside of the tent.

I'm wondering: Do members of Congress as you talk to them, John Engler, do they resent that an agency is attempting to get ahead of them on the regulatory? It's sort of like a pincer movement. On the one hand, you've got the lawsuits that are everywhere, on the Endangered Species Act, on the other hand you've got

EPA. Congress is caught in the middle. It's supposed to be the one drawing up whatever rules emerge if a cap-and-trade even emerges from Congress, but they're getting left behind by bureaucrats.

ENGLER: There's no question that the ideology of this issue has in some cases with some members outstripped any sensibility. Again, John Dingell was mentioned earlier. John Dingell has been around the Congress 50 years, and John Dingell, wouldn't think he'd take a back seat to anyone. He's a great hunter and fisher and he loves the outdoors, but he also comes from a blue collar district. For years he's understood that you can have a balance. You can have a cleaner environment while at the same time you can still have an economy that works and jobs.

That's what's going on right now. The California influence on the Congress is such that ... You look at California's record out there, they've been hemorrhaging jobs.

HH: We have an 11-and-a-half percent unemployment rate in the Golden State. I heard Meg Whitman today, I'll talk about this after the break, give a talk about how people are shutting down. I'm sure your membership base has shrunk for manufacturing in California, John Engler.

ENGLER: Yes. You know who likes it, likes California? It's the guys who run the manufacturing and business associations in places like Arizona and Nevada. It's been great for them.

But, Hugh, I think this issue – and I think coming in the middle of this recession – to take this step. We'll see where they go with this. But I can tell you we're ramping up to have a full-scale debate across the country about how to approach this.

And then you've got the other factor: Guess what, we're not the only place in the world that produces emissions. We have to compete with every other place. The president has been having meetings with a lot of foreign leaders. ... Until we all go, it's pretty hard for one country to act by themselves. You've got have places like China. They were the biggest winner of Kyoto credits being purchased in Europe.

HH: Governor, before we run out of time. Given everything that's coming out – left, right, center, different proposals, cap and trade, health care, consumer product safety – are you folks up to this battle?

ENGLER: I'm not sure. I think that's a very good question. We're up to some of the battles. We're a relatively small organization, but they're coming from every corner.

The card check, thanks to Senator Specter, is held in abeyance for a while, but that hasn't even gone away. There are a lot of other bad labor issues, other bad trial lawyer handouts being talked about. Opportunities for more litigation.

The tax debate is everywhere we look because of the spending and the deficit. If you want spending and deficits, you better like taxes because they're coming there.

HH: Keep fighting the good fight, governor. We're out of time. John Engler, National Association of Manufacturers. I'll be right back. Nam.org.