

News from Commissioner Dana Murphy



April 28, 2016

A Forced Choice – OG&E application for scrubbers

The case before us today is the result of the federal EPA forcing a public utility in Oklahoma to make costly changes to comply with a federal plan imposed on Oklahoma for regional haze.

Once again, Oklahomans find themselves squeezed by 'Big Brother' as a result of a questionable federal mandate. The EPA admits the Regional Haze rule is not based on health concerns, and Oklahoma had developed a less-costly and less-disruptive approach to comply. But Oklahoma's proposal was rejected by the EPA. So now, Oklahoma public utilities and Oklahoma consumers are left in the unfortunate position of eventually paying for a federal mandate, and state officials are being forced to carry out a federal regulation they did not create.

OG&E has requested the Commission approve installation of two dry scrubbers at the Sooner Plant to comply with the federal Regional Haze rule, with cost recovery to be determined in a later case. OG&E's request and the Commission's granting of that request are consistent with meeting what the federal law requires.

While opinions vary on the best approach for complying with this federal law, the one approved in this case is reasonable. It helps avoid the trap of relying on only one main fuel source for baseload electric generation when that fuel source is subject to market forces and speculation. While wind and solar are an important part of that mix and should continue to grow in Oklahoma, they're intermittent so they can't currently meet the State's critical need for electricity on a 24/7 basis.

Oklahoma should not depend on other states for diverse power generation sources. OG&E customers have already made a huge investment in the Sooner Plant. It would not be wise to lose that dependable resource or the insurance it provides.

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