

Montana's Kevin Dome could be new wave of clean air technology

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- Nov 20, 2014

I have the honor of being one of Montana's longest-serving mayors. As the mayor of Shelby (an office I've held since 1990) I've learned a thing or two about seizing every opportunity that comes our direction. I know Montana's future is full of opportunities to create jobs and boost our small businesses and our big industries. But one in particular deserves our attention.

Earlier this fall, Gov. Steve Bullock unveiled several different ways our state can meet upcoming air pollution requirements. Like most Montanans, I'm not keen on the federal government telling states what we are to do. But in this case, Montana has a lot of flexibility to find a path forward that works best for our state.

So Bullock did. His proposals — none of them are binding — show us that we can cut carbon dioxide pollution by 21 percent by the year 2030 without shutting down a single coal-fired power plant. The governor's scenarios suggest we can cut costs for consumers and create new jobs in the process — through exciting new ideas like carbon capture and sequestration.

That's what caught my attention. You see, Toole County is home to an underground geological formation called the Kevin Dome. Right now we're leading the way with an exciting Department of Energy research project to examine the technology of capturing carbon released from coal-driven energy and other industrial sources and depositing it in underground formations like the Kevin Dome. Carbon capture technology can also have a huge, positive impact on Montana's oil and gas industry. All that carbon goes back into the earth, not into the air we all breathe.

That's clean air. It's good jobs. It's innovation at work.

When challenges come our way, we can turn our backs, we can stick our heads in the sand, or we can look for the hidden opportunities. I'm proud to serve a city that always looks for silver linings, and I'm proud that our governor does the same.