



Ex-Sen. Landrieu inks 'clean coal' client

By Megan R. Wilson - 10/09/15 10:37 AM EDT

The partnership behind a shuttered “clean coal” power plant has enlisted former Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) to push for a revival of the federally-backed project.

Newly filed disclosure forms show that Landrieu will be working for the FutureGen Industrial Alliance, a group of coal companies.

It's her first lobbying client since joining law and lobby firm Van Ness Feldman in May.

The coalition was formed to research and develop “near-zero emissions coal technology” that stores carbon dioxide underground. That project, called FutureGen 2.0, would refit a coal-fired power plant in western Illinois to inject emissions into a subterranean pipeline.

The project dates back to the Bush administration, when it was abandoned because of costs. Although the Obama Administration authorized \$1.1 billion for the effort as part of the stimulus package in 2009, the Department of Energy (DOE) withdrew its support earlier this year. The government has only spent roughly \$200 million of the pledged amount.

“In order to best protect taxpayer interests, the Department of Energy has initiated a structured closeout of federal support for the project that will help maximize the value of investments to date while minimizing ongoing risks and further costs,” DOE spokesman Bill Gibbons said in a statement in February.

The alliance did not immediately return a request for comment, nor did Landrieu.

According to Senate ethics rules, Landrieu, who lost her seat in a highly contentious election last year, is banned from lobbying offices in the House and Senate for two years.

She can, however, lobby the administration.

The lobbying disclosure forms, dated Aug. 25, say that Landrieu and four other lobbyists at the firm are working on “funding issues regarding the FutureGen 2.0 project.”

Financing for FutureGen 2.0 stalled, because officials were skeptical that the project could be completed before the funds expired in September 2015.

It ran into delays in obtaining permits and faced some hurdles around negotiating with the state of Illinois to require electricity consumers to finance the rest of the \$1.7 billion price tag, according to **Crain's Chicago Business**, which declared the project “dead.”

“Despite the Alliance's commitment to advancing carbon capture and storage [CCS] technology and cleaner energy from coal, as well as our belief that there are solutions to address the impending deadline, the Alliance must comply with DOE's directive,” said FutureGen Industrial Alliance CEO Ken Humphreys in February. “Our hope is that industry and government will continue to find ways to develop CCS technology for a cleaner, more secure energy future.”

Environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, celebrated the move by DOE to step away from the project, but Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) mourned the loss.

“This is a huge disappointment for both Central Illinois and supporters of clean coal technology,” **he said in a statement** at the time. The

alliance has also shed members — and the PR firm tasked with upkeep on its website — along the way, but it still has its CEO in place.

When Landrieu joined Van Ness Feldman, she was picked to help lead the firm's public policy team with former Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash.), who formerly served as the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

— *Timothy Cama contributed to this report.*

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