

Oklahoman

Congressman Frank Lucas Sees President Barack Obama as Foe to Farmers

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By Chris Casteel

Rep. Frank Lucas lashed out Wednesday at President Barack Obama's administration, saying it had been the most unfriendly one to farmers and ranchers in recent history.

"It is clear the Obama administration is no friend to agriculture," Lucas, R-Cheyenne, said in a speech to the National Association of Farm Broadcasting on Obama's 100th day in office.

Lucas, the top Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, said the administration has done more to undermine the 2008 farm bill than to implement it, "starting with efforts to eliminate direct payments and to force all farmers to release their tax returns before receiving support payments."

But the main target of Lucas' ire was the president's goal of capping carbon emissions, possibly by instituting a "cap-and-trade" system in which industries that exceed the emissions limits buy allowances.

"Cap and trade is nothing more than a national energy tax, and the effects will be far-reaching to businesses, consumers and even more so to rural America," Lucas said.

"Agriculture is a bull's-eye industry for cap and trade because it is an energy-intensive industry. Whether it's the fuel in the tractor, the fertilizer for the crops or the delivery of food to the grocery store, agriculture uses a great deal of energy throughout production." What's the threat?

Moreover, Lucas said, rural residents travel farther than urban residents and spend more on fuel as a percentage of income. And rural electric co-ops generate 80 percent of their electricity using coal, while the national average is 50 percent, he said.

But in a speech in Missouri on Wednesday, Obama portrayed global warming as the real threat to the economy and said he didn't think people appreciate the potential damage of climate change.

Obama said capping carbon emissions could be done in a "smart, gradual way" that protects consumers and preserves the economy.

"Everybody knows that we're going to have to do this," he said.

The country that moves the fastest on alternative energy, he said, "will dominate the economy of the 21st century the same way that America dominated the 20th century. I want that to be America."

