

# GOP star fights for coal vs. El

BY JOHN RABY  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, W.Va.—Patrick Morrisey, the West Virginia attorney general taking on President Obama's clean power plan, is no stranger to the hot seat: He parlayed a love of tennis as a young adult into becoming a line judge at the U.S. Open and other tournaments, regularly standing up to second-guessing by irate players and fans.

Fast forward to 2016. The 48-year-old transplanted New Jersey native is challenging the Obama administration's calls, joined by several mostly Republican states in suing to try to overturn federal greenhouse gas rules. He says taking the heat on the courts taught him to stay cool in court years later.

"You learn how to handle pressure when you have a crowd of people screaming at you for one of your calls," Morrisey told The Associated Press. "... Of course, I'd not like to repeat being booed out of the stadium. But that could be good practice for politics."

Elected in 2012, West Virginia's first GOP attorney general in eight decades has made fighting "federal overreach" his mantra. He's leading a coalition of attorneys general that won a U.S. Supreme Court stay last month against Obama's clean power plan.

That plan against climate change focuses particularly on cutting pollutants from coal-fired power plants. Welcomed by many, it's blasted by critics as a possible knockout blow to the coal industry.

Pressed by Morrisey's group, the justices froze the Environmental Protection Agency's plan to reduce U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions 32 percent by 2030—while legal challenges are pending.

In West Virginia, seven coal-fired power plants have shut in recent years, and more than 1,000 miners have lost work since December alone.

"I'm very fortunate to have this job at this time so I could fight for coal miners and make West Virginia a better place to live," Morrisey said.

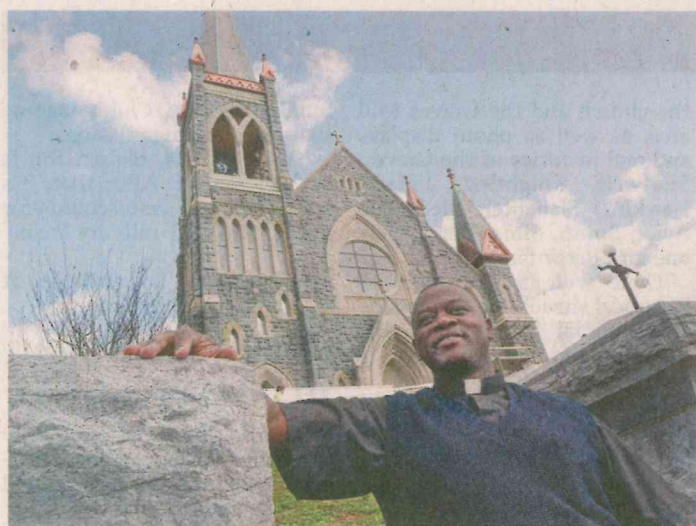
Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, co-chair of the attorney generals' group, said Morrisey's a fighter: "He quickly recognized what an impact it would have on West Virginia. I think that's why he grabbed the leadership mantle."

More than a dozen other states support Obama's plan, while environmentalists criticize Morrisey as hindering moves toward cleaner energy sources.

"We believe that the attorney general's blind allegiance to coal is a disservice to future generations," said Jim Kotcon of West Virginia's Sierra Club chapter. "The clean power plan is necessary to address climate change. We think the EPA is on sound legal ground."

The White House declined to comment about Morrisey.

Democratic California



MIKE TRIPP / THE DAILY NEWS LEADER

The Rev. Joseph Wamala stands in front of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Staunton. A \$3.2 million renovation took the church exterior apart, stone by stone.

## Staunton church gears up for reveal

BY LAURA PETERS  
THE NEWS LEADER

STAUNTON—The church that sits high above Augusta Street was covered up and a mystery to all those who passed by for nearly a year.

The scaffolding is down and, as of last week, most of the white sheets that covered the large Staunton church had been removed. Exterior renovations for Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church are almost at a close.

The \$3.2 million renovation took the church exterior apart, stone by stone. The church funded the project with a capital campaign and a loan. The Rev. Joseph Wamala said a crew came out and laser-scanned the entire church to number each stone and ensure they were replicated exactly.

"It was quite an intricate process," he said. "They knew exactly where the stone was taken from, and where it'd go back."

Not many construction crews wanted to take it on, Wamala said. Many found it intimidating to take the entire exterior structure apart. The one who was up for the challenge was Lantz Construction Co., with Rugo Stone and WDP Associates.

"They were very key in this process," Wamala said. "If they hadn't done such a great job, we wouldn't have what we have right now."

The lengthy process was undertaken in sections to ensure accuracy in the scans.

"It was pretty accurate," Wamala said. "So they replicated it as it looked."

Many had the misconception that the building was just being cleaned, Wamala said.

Crews removed the 125-year-old green serpentine stone. Wamala said parishioners took the stones home and the broken pieces had to be tossed.

"They wanted a bit of the church," he said.

The remaining original stone will be turned into a memorial to the original church.

The decision came to rebuild once the congregation realized the foundation of the church was crumbling. Pieces were falling apart, and Wamala said he couldn't risk anyone getting hurt.

**"THIS CHURCH WAS BUILT BY IRISH IMMIGRANTS, AND WE WANTED IT TO BE TRUE TO THEIR SPIRIT."**

— REV. JOSEPH WAMALA,  
PASTOR, SAINT FRANCIS

"We decided to take on this project not only to make this church beautiful but to make it safer for the parishioners," he said. "One of the reasons we did such a detailed renovation was to keep the character of the church." "This church was built by Irish immigrants, and we wanted it to be true to their spirit," Wamala added. "One of the things we didn't want to change was the character of the church."

Wamala didn't want to do just small fixes to address structural problems for the time being. He thought by investing the time and money to do a complete overhaul would mean less fixes down the road.

The green serpentine stone was replaced with green granite. Wamala said the exact serpentine that was originally used in the building isn't quarried anymore.

Along with the exterior of the building being replaced, the inner brick wall between the exterior wall and the interior church wall was reinforced and crumbled pieces were replaced.

Windows were restored and stained glass was added. Copper finials—the tips at the top corners along the church—were added where concrete ones were previously.

The renovations did not disrupt services. Wamala said he didn't want to move the congregation and end up losing people, so the crew would break at lunch to enable afternoon mass.

The rededication of the church will be May 8.

"We are glad and happy we have reached this far and nearing completion," he said. "It was indeed a mystery, since the whole place was wrapped up and covered in scaffolding. Each time the scaffolding was pulled down (the parishioners) have been amazed."



JOHN RABY / ASSOCIATED PRESS

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, in a coal-dependent state, is leading a federal lawsuit against President Barack Obama's new clean-power rules.

Gov. Jerry Brown wrote Morrisey and Paxton that their arguments were "legally flimsy" and "at worst, you're sending a dangerous message to the world: on climate change, do nothing."

Of detractors, Morrisey said: "People aren't always going to be happy with every decision that you make. But if you make the right decision and you stick to it, good things will usually happen."

It's a fight Morrisey didn't foresee upon moving to Harpers Ferry in 2006 from a private Washington, D.C., law practice. Yet the longer he lived in West Virginia, "the more I realized the state was being held back by policies that were not in the people's interest."

Frustrated by a five-term attorney general reluctant to oppose Obama's policies, Morrisey ran in 2012 and

won. His campaign aligned with state Democrats accusing Obama of waging "war on coal."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce acknowledged involvement in Morrisey's race. CEO Thomas J. Donahue said the chamber's Institute for Legal Reform, which doesn't have to disclose its donors, conducted "voter education efforts" in several states that year. Board members include executives at several big corporations, including energy companies.

Morrisey's campaign continues. In 2013, after Obama targeted carbon dioxide at power plants, Morrisey filed a Supreme Court brief, joined by other states.

In 2014, Morrisey wrote "Why I Sued The President," a "National Review" article on Obama's dare to Republi-

cans to try to block initiatives. "I accept president's invitation," Morrisey wrote. "The president is not a king."

Morrisey also said federal moves to shift responsibility to states for canceled health care took on pharmaceutical makers while stronger prescription regulations in a state with fatal overdoses.

"Our intent is to win cases," Morrisey told The AP. "We only file suits and briefs we believe we are correct on. We have tried up the works on a number of cases because of administration has been wrong in terms of its executive authority."

He said he focused on opposing regulations of a "great harm."

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