

Ill. lawmakers call for GAO review of FutureGen decision

By Paul Merrion

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(Crain's) — Two Illinois lawmakers and other senior members of the House Science and Technology Committee are calling for a formal investigation of the Energy Department's controversial decision to scrap FutureGen, a \$1.8 billion ultra-low emission coal-fired power plant slated for downstate Mattoon.

A letter being drafted by the science panel members to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, a congressional investigative agency, requests "an examination of the Administration's rationale and plans for restructuring this program," according to a Capitol Hill source.

The department's decision to restructure the program into a series of demonstration projects across the country has been blasted by Illinois lawmakers as politically motivated after Illinois beat out two Texas locations following a lengthy site-selection competition.

Energy Department officials have called that accusation "outrageous," saying they pulled the plug because proposed costs for the project escalated.

Originally, the government was supposed to pay 76% while an industry consortium and international partners picked up the rest.

The letter to the GAO is signed by Rep. Bart Gordon, D-Tn., chairman of the Science Committee, Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Chicago, the panel's vice-chairman, Rep. Jerry Costello, D-Belleville, and Rep. Nick Lampson, D-TX., chairman of the panel's subcommittee on energy and environment.