



Written by [Salena Zito](#) on February 6, 2024

Democrats Say Biden's Pause on LNG Is Like 'Throwing a Match in a Bale of Hay'

A robust chorus of congressional Democrats, business leaders and Republicans, as well as international allies, are calling on President Joe Biden to undo the pause he placed on liquefied natural gas exports. Almost in unison, they say his decision undermines his climate agenda, jeopardizes national security, empowers Russia and Iran, and creates a schism with allies who depend on this clean energy from the U.S. to fuel their countries.

Longtime Ohio Democratic Rep. Tim Ryan admitted in a post on X that the halt was "a major political issue that the D's have just put themselves squarely on the wrong side" and would hurt his party's ability to win seats in the Great Lakes Midwest.

Pennsylvania Sens. John Fetterman and Bob Casey Jr. said in a joint statement to the Washington Examiner that as senators who represent the second largest natural gas-producing state, they were going to push Biden to undo his decision.

"This industry has created good-paying energy jobs in towns and communities across the Commonwealth and has played a critical role in promoting U.S. energy independence," the statement said. They said the immediate impact on Pennsylvania remains to be seen, but they have deep concerns about the long-term impact this pause will have on the thousands of jobs in Pennsylvania's natural gas industry.

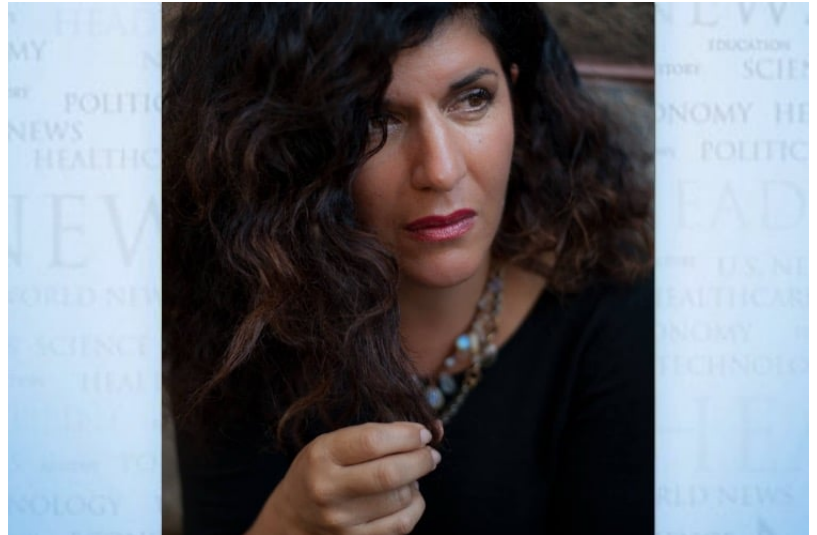
On Jan. 26, the Biden administration announced it was halting approval of new licenses to export United States LNG so it can continue studying how those shipments supposedly contribute to climate change.

The decision was pegged immediately as a gesture to shore up young people and climate activists for the November election, especially when Biden admitted his decision was based on "heeding the calls of young people." He charged that "MAGA Republicans ... willfully deny the urgency of the climate crisis."

Mary Landrieu, a Democrat who served as a U.S. senator from Louisiana and is now a senior policy adviser for Van Ness Feldman, an advocacy firm on energy, environment and land-use issues, said as a supporter of Biden, she is deeply disappointed in his decision for a number of reasons.

"I think politically it's the wrong step for our economy and it undermines the president's own climate initiatives," she said.

Landrieu said that while Biden's work on passing the CHIPS Act and the infrastructure bill laid a foundation for an industrial renaissance in the United States, "This action undermines that entire effort. ... The reason it does is because natural gas is the only available, scalable, low cost, lower emission fuel



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or foundational fuel to build this economy.”

Landrieu noted the country does not have enough nuclear power or hydropower to facilitate that, “And while wind and solar are coming on and we are excited about that advance, they are not sufficient, nor do they run 24/7,” she said.

“There is an international aspect; in that this pause undermines our national security and sends the absolute wrong signal to our allies around the world that we’re reconsidering a promise we made to them,” she added.

On Tuesday, Ken Saito, Japan’s minister of economy, trade and industry, said in a press conference that Japan plans on lobbying against Washington’s move. He said LNG is vital to his country’s long-term energy supply. Japan is the world’s second-biggest buyer of liquefied natural gas and among several of our allies who rely on the American market for the energy source.

Landrieu also said the curtailment of LNG shipments undercuts the U.S. government’s promise to help Europe wean itself off of Russian gas in the wake of Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine.

“This market is being created ... it can help us lower our emissions, not just because it makes money, not just because it’s good for our national security, but it is responsible for lowering domestic emissions. And as we displace international coal, we lower global emissions,” she said.

Then she added, “And it certainly doesn’t make sense for the politics of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan.”

Toby Rice, the CEO of EQT, the United States’ No. 1 natural gas producer, also expressed frustration with Biden’s decision.

“Pausing LNG pauses emission reductions in this world because limiting LNG means more coal. More coal means more emissions. So it’s as simple as that,” he explained, adding, “It’s ironic that this was done under the intention to have this be for the climate, but this action actually is a major step backwards when it comes to climate.”

Also, he said, “Renewables cannot do this job by themselves and you need a heavyweight solution. Well that heavyweight solution, that heavyweight partner is LNG, (but) this executive order moves the climate movement backwards.”

Rice said the timing of this is aimed at future facilities that aren’t permitted yet. “This sends a chilling message to any investor that is considering about making these investments that are going to bring energy security to the world,” he said, adding, “Limiting LNG is going to limit our energy security.”

Marty Durbin, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Global Energy Institute, called Biden’s pause an “unforced error on the president’s and the administration’s part.”

“To try and now take this issue where it has been an unmitigated success and our ability to provide this natural gas to our allies, to lower emissions around the world, to increase energy security, makes no sense,” he said.

He pointed to another Democratic senator, Chris Coons from Biden’s home state of Delaware, who said, “we need to be really careful about this.”

“He gets it, as do many other Democrats that are looking at us going, ‘Why is this happening?’” Durbin said.



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Landrieu said this is a political mistake for Biden, “And look, I’ve made mistakes before in politics, believe me, I could talk to you for hours about the mistakes I made. So no one is perfect,” she said. Still, she added, “This move by Biden is like throwing a match in a bale of hay.”

Salena Zito is a CNN political analyst, and a staff reporter and columnist for the Washington Examiner. She reaches the Everyman and Everywoman through shoe-leather journalism, traveling from Main Street to the beltway and all places in between. To find out more about Salena and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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