Unintended Consequences and the Texas "Big Freeze" Energy Disaster

Last week Texas experienced a cold snap that resulted in serious statewide damage, death, and destruction. The collapse of the state's energy grid left millions of Texans in the dark and freezing for days at a time. Tragically, at least 30 people died.

Ron Paul
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There are many reasons why Texas became like a Third World country, and we should be careful not to pin all the blame on just one factor. But it seems clear that the disaster was to a large degree caused by political decisions to shift toward "green" energy generated from solar and wind and by Governor Abbott's authoritarian Covid restrictions.

Abbott, who won a "wind leadership" award just this month, oversaw the near-collapse of wind energy generation last week. Yet the politicization of energy generation in favor of "green" alternatives over natural gas and other fossil fuels has led to the unintended consequences of freezing Texans facing multiple millions of dollars in property damage and worse.

Additionally, federal emissions and other restrictions forced Texas to beg Washington for permission to generate power at higher levels in anticipation of unprecedented demand. Governor Abbott finally received permission from the Department of Energy on February 14th, but by then many facilities found themselves off-line due to freezing conditions.

Why should the Federal government be allowed to freeze Texans to death in the name of controlling emissions from energy generation plants? It's a classic example of politics over people. I guess if you want to make a "Green New Deal" omelet, you have to break a few eggs.

While Governor Abbott was quick to blame energy generators and even the state Electric Reliability Council of Texas, NBC News in Dallas reported that ERCOT "did not conduct any on-site inspections of the state's power plants to see if they were ready for this winter season. Due to COVID-19 they conducted virtual tabletop exercises instead — but only with 16 percent of the state's power generating facilities."

Governor Abbott's authoritarian Covid executive orders at least indirectly led to lax inspection, maintenance, and winterization of wind and other energy generation plants.

But Texas did not only freeze because of Abbott's Covid restrictions. For the better part of a year thousands of businesses have been destroyed. Recovering drug addicts and alcoholics have relapsed. Depression and suicides have skyrocketed. Children have been deprived of education.

And for what? Texas with Abbott's restrictions fared no better than Florida with no restrictions when it comes to Covid cases and deaths. The Texas governor knew that months ago when the data from Florida proved that lockdowns, masks, and other restrictions had no effect. But he refused to change course. He refused to follow the brave lead of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and open Texas completely.

Politicians too stubborn or fearful to change course when facts dictate otherwise do not deserve to remain in office. Governors Gavin Newsom in California and Andrew Cuomo in New York are finally

facing consequences for their Covid authoritarianism. When the smoke clears — and it is rapidly clearing — many more of these petty tyrants will fall. That list of deposed Covid tyrants may well include Texas Governor Greg Abbott — and the slumbering Texas state legislature — as well.

Let's hope Texans — and all Americans — will learn from this and more forcefully demand their God-given liberty!

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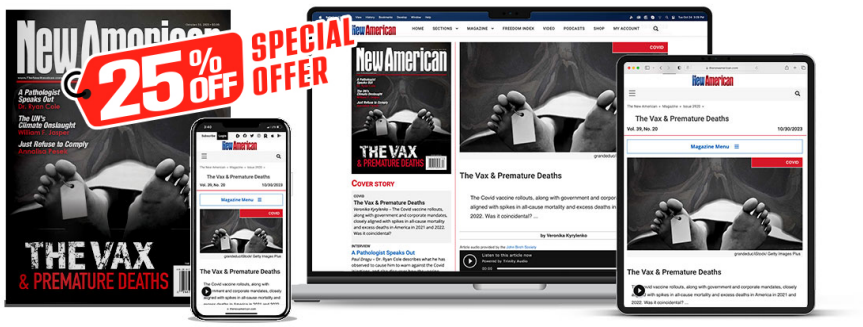

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